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I have taught literature through the methodologies of psychoanalysis for many years, and in this essay I sketch, first, how an instructor can use some basic psychological concepts to teach *Wuthering Heights*.[1] In defense of such a method, I would argue that by learning to read *Wuthering Heights* psychoanalytically, students can understand how life cycles tend to have a narrative pattern of their own: a nursery drama (food, gluttony, and starvation anxieties), then childhood traumas (loss, abandonment, body issues), followed by adolescent angst (identity concerns), and then the challenges of adulthood and maturation (reconciling love and work). As psychoanalysis is based on explaining the coping mechanisms that the psyche uses throughout life, it is crucial for students to see that all stages of life are characterized by particular traumas and fantasies. Second, this essay outlines how to use basic psychoanalytical theories to teach the novel, as well as to introduce students to the most important, or most accessible, psychological approaches to critical reading. I recognize that teachers may be hesitant to use psychoanalysis in the classroom, fearing that they are not adequately trained in psychology or that its introduction will force them to address issues that could become inappropriately personal or awkward. But with a basic background in what I would call student-friendly Freud, most teachers should feel comfortable with raising and discussing some of the deeply resonant psychological issues that *Wuthering Heights* raises. A listing of Internet sources for the definitions of the psychological terms used is provided in the appendix at the conclusion of the essay.

To my surprise, students enjoy studying fairy tales; not only do the tales contain blatant use of literary devices, but they also provide miniature case studies that allow students to use the psychoanalytic concepts that literary critics employ: fantasy, trauma, repression, condensation, displacement, repetition, the death wish, the uncanny, mourning and melancholia, and transference and projection. I begin my teaching of *Wuthering Heights*, then, with the introduction of a few core fairy tales, to demonstrate the basic structure of narrative, while at the same time making the point that the simplest texts exist to accomplish psychological work for their readers (not to mention their writers). Fairy tales mediate nursery anxieties, and there is no better way to illustrate this idea than to teach "Hansel and Gretel" and to talk about the earliest food and body issues (bread crumbs as the means to survival, starvation versus gluttony, the gingerbread house as symbol of the mother's body, and mother as ambivalent—both feared and loved—source of nourishment).

Early childhood issues are also developed in *Wuthering Heights*, in the oral imagery that suffuses the text, as well as in the early abandonment of Heath-

cliff and his continual uncertainty about his parentage—remember Nelly's comforting him with the notion that perhaps he is displaced royalty (50). The concern with childhood gluttony or starvation is played out in the scene in which Heathcliff and the elder Catherine watch Isabel and Edgar quarreling over their tea table, just before Catherine is attacked by the Linton dog. This Linton family tea party is uncannily repeated with variation when Lockwood thinks he is being served tea by young Catherine and mistakenly sits down on a mass of cats and is threatened by a dog. The human and animal anxiously coexist in the worlds of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, suggesting that they are never fully resolved in any of the characters.

We move next to fairy tales that mediate adolescent issues, especially bodily transformations and the need to separate from one's parents before one can seek a suitable mate. The classic text here has been "Sleeping Beauty," a tale that speaks in graphic terms about menstruation (pricking one's finger at a spinning wheel) and the latency period of psychosexual development (the 100 years of sleep). The kiss that awakens Sleeping Beauty also effectively places her in the arms of her new mate, allowing her to survive her parents—and even reject them—without suffering guilt or indeed even observing their demise: they died during the hundred years of sleep. Another fairy tale that explores adolescent issues (anxiety about body changes, control of the emotions, public scenes of shame and embarrassment) that are pertinent to *Wuthering Heights* is "Brother and Sister," in which orphaned siblings flee their wicked stepmother and live in the forest, where the sister retains her human form, marries, and gives birth to the king's son, while her brother is transformed into an animal, a deer, and is never fully civilized. A heterosexualized version of this tale is "Beauty and the Beast," another well-known story in the animal-groom cycle, in which the love of a good and beautiful woman redeems a man whose faults have transformed him into a beast.[2]

By way of introducing my approach to fiction, I explain that Freud never resolved the question of which comes first in the development of a person: traumas or the fantasies that help the person cope with those traumas. In fact, it seems certain that what some people report as physical traumas are sometimes fantasies. To extrapolate from what we know of the slippery slope of the psyche, it appears that literature can be understood as almost always a fantasy formation designed to ward off an experience that writers understand as traumatic. By replaying it imaginatively, they master the trauma. I use Freud's theory that there are three basic fantasies—seduction, castration, and primal scene—and that all of them have the same psychic structures of meaning. Fantasies function as the disguises of real or imagined traumatic events of childhood. By translating those traumas into an imagined scene that veils a memory without obliterating it, the fantasy allows the adult to master the experience in a substitute formation (the poem, the novel). Fantasies mediate between the conscious and the unconscious mind because repression will screen a trauma that can be expressed only after the event and in a distorted

fashion. As Jean Laplanche and Bertrand Pontalis have observed, "Fantasy precedes identity."[3] To schematize how I think fantasies operate in conjunction with trauma in literary texts, I provide my students with the following chart:

> *Fantasy of seduction:* Corresponding trauma of betrayal; manifested in literature through the fantasy of desire; oedipal rivalries; incest; solipsism and narcissism; self-loathing; gynophobia; somaphobia; emergence of sexuality; eating disorders.
>
> *Fantasy of castration:* Corresponding trauma of adandonment or desertion; manifested in literature through the fantasies of death and sexual difference; beating fantasies; persecutory fantasies; decapitation; fetishism; sadism and masochism; self-mutilation.
>
> *Fantasy of primal scene:* Corresponding trauma of separation or otherness; manifested in literature through the fantasy of heritage; identity or origins; voyeurism and exhibitionism; family romance scenarios; scopophilia and epistemephilia; gossip; boundary issues.

What is crucial about this chart is that it maps trauma onto fantasy—or, rather, it illustrates the idea that trauma will always manifest itself as a variety of fantasy formations that in turn can be recognized in fairly discernible ways in literary texts.

Following the categories in this chart, I generally start by explaining the fantasy of seduction, which arises as a defense against childhood betrayal (real or imagined). Seduction is perhaps most familiar to my students, as its tropes are highly visible in our culture, dominating the action and meaning of most cinema and popular culture. Seduction operates largely through oedipal configurations, which function throughout *Wuthering Heights* in the sheer proliferation of triangles. The fantasy of seducing a parental figure (or the substitute of a parent) is a powerful denial of a child's actual sense of powerlessness; hence we see Isabella desperately trying to win the love of the sadistic Heathcliff, wallowing in her abjection before finally gaining enough self-esteem or survival instinct to flee him. Psychoanalytic critics have read the elder Cathy as Heathcliff's mother figure, while others have interpreted Heathcliff as the mother figure of the text. Still others see Nelly Dean positioned in the mother's role or young Catherine functioning as mother to Lockwood, Heathcliff, Linton, and Hareton (see Wion; Reed).

Solipsism and narcissism are also key manifestations of seduction and betrayal, defenses that posit love of the self as a safeguard against accepting the otherness of another person. *Wuthering Heights* provides one of the most famous solipsistic statements in the history of literature: "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind . . . as my own being" (73). Heathcliff suffers from the same solipsism in regard to Cathy, going so far as to remove the coffin sides so that their remains can mingle as one after their deaths. This absorption of one's self into another is the essence of one type of love

(Narcissus staring into his reflected face in the pool), and perhaps forms the basis of the incestuous pull we discern between Cathy and Heathcliff, but it is not a mature love that values the unique otherness of the beloved. The desire to merge totally with another who looks similar to oneself is a manifestation of the childhood fantasy of having an identical twin, and despite their physical differences (he dark, she light), Heathcliff and Cathy seem never to have outgrown the union they experienced in their childhood bed. Just before her death, Cathy locates the source of all her unhappiness in being shut out of the oak-paneled bed she had shared with Heathcliff, while he is haunted throughout his life by memories of Cathy "resting her darling head on the same pillow as she did when a child" (257).

The fantasy of seduction, so frequently thwarted by society's conventions, often manifests its blockage in a variety of attacks on the body—most typically, eating disorders and fear of emerging sexuality. Certainly such disorders can be seen in the strange eating scenes throughout the novel, in the elder Cathy's anorexia (her identification with the starving lapwings left in the nest), her hysterical rejection of her pregnancy (her failure to recognize herself in the · mirror), and in Heathcliff's death by starvation.

The second fantasy, castration, appears most dominant throughout the novel (interesting in a female-authored text). If we see a literary character constantly being beaten, as the child Heathcliff is, then we know that much of the psychic energy of the text can be located in the fantasy of castration and, therefore, in fears of abandonment or desertion. I point out to my students that Emily Brontë's mother died when she was three, while her two oldest sisters died at Cowan Bridge School when she was seven and trying to survive with them in a typhus-infected dumping ground. To lose one's mother and then one's mother substitutes at such an early age would be a difficult trauma for any child to process. In addition, Emily could easily have experienced being sent to Cowan Bridge School, along with her three older siblings, at the age of six, as abandonment by her father, a repetition of her mother's abandonment of her in death. And then to survive when the two older girls died would have produced a level of guilt that we now call the survivor syndrome. Certainly father figures are ambivalent forces throughout the novel, as well as in the poetry Brontë authored during her life.[4] Beatings as well as beating fantasies occur throughout *Wuthering Heights*; some of the most obvious are the dreamed assault by cudgels on Lockwood in the Jabes Branderham dream, the whippings of Heathcliff, the hanging of Isabella's dog, the beatings of Isabella, the persecution of young Catherine, and the beatings of Linton Heathcliff. Masochism and sadism dominate the relationship of Isabella and Heathcliff, but the positions are reversed in the Heathcliff and Cathy relation; Heathcliff identifies Cathy as a torturer and himself as her victim (100).

The third fantasy, primal scene, is always the most awkward and embarrassing for my students to identify and discuss in a class. But a manifestation of primal scene fantasies reveals the underlying trauma of otherness or

separation from one's origins. I generally refer to Keats's "Ode to Psyche" as an obvious example of a primal scene fantasy—in which the poet stumbles on Adam and Eve post coitus in the Garden of Eden—but I admit that such a scene does not occur in *Wuthering Heights*. There are, however, curious patterns in the text that suggest a fairly obsessive concern with trying to understand a secret, perhaps a sexual secret, like where babies come from. Isn't it odd that the identity of the orphaned child Heathcliff is the crux of the novel? It is almost as if by solving that mystery—where did the baby Heathcliff come from?—we, as well as the characters, will solve all the conundrums of the novel and of life. And where there are secrets there will be gossips—hence Nelly and her ever-willing listener Lockwood. Like a mother trying to tell a child the facts of life, Nelly just keeps talking to Lockwood; by the end, they both seem as foggy about everything as they were on the night of his arrival. Nelly observes, "But where did he come from, the little dark thing?" (293).

When one uses psychoanalytic theory in the classroom, one is soon dealing with an author's biography or psychobiography. With Emily Brontë we are presented with a particularly tough case. We know nothing about how she processed her adult experiences, since we have no letters, no journals, only the poetry and the novel. Of course, we do know the barest biographical facts, and from those I would suggest that we can locate the origin of her traumas in childhood, where we know all trauma begins. When an adult experiences another rejection, betrayal, or death of a loved one, the original trauma is reactivated, like a wound that has never fully healed. We know only that Emily Brontë left home twice as a student and once to work as a governess; each time she ventured from home, she became so depressed or sick that she had to return to Haworth within months. Clearly her identity was bound up with her status and security in the tight network of family and moors over which she held sway. I often point out to students that Brontë was most alive and most conscious when she was at home; life outside her home environment must have seemed like a bad dream to her—unreal, nightmarish, ghostly.

Thus it is no coincidence that dream work begins *Wuthering Heights* when Lockwood, the interloper, falls asleep in the elder Catherine's oak-paneled bed after reading her childhood diary. That his two dreams are foregrounded in the novel and that Catherine considers her dreams as important, highly charged moments throughout her life cause us to confront the meanings of dreams, as well as the text itself as dream work. Freud locates four main aspects to the dream work, the means by which the hidden wish becomes expressed: condensation, displacement, considerations of representability, and secondary revision.

Condensation is one of the methods by which the repressed (in an author's life or in a literary character's history) returns in hidden ways in the dream. For example, in dreams multiple thoughts are often combined and amalgamated into a single element of the manifest dream (Cathy's dream about being

thrown out of heaven and landing on top of Wuthering Heights suggests her fear of marriage to Edgar, as well as her understanding that separation from Heathcliff and her childhood home and bed will destroy her). Cathy herself tells Nelly how important dreams are to her, although clearly she doesn't read the warnings well: "I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind" (70).

Displacement is one of the methods by which the repressed returns in hidden ways. For example, in dreams the affect (emotions) associated with threatening impulses is often transferred elsewhere (displaced), so that apparently trivial elements in the manifest dream seem to cause extraordinary distress, while "what was the essence of the dream-thoughts finds only passing and indistinct representation in the dream" (Freud, *Lectures* 22).[5] For example, in Lockwood's first dream, he fixates on Joseph as a guide through a snowy walk home (which home? *Heimleich*, the opposite of the uncanny?). Joseph is equipped with the "heavy-headed cugdel," but Lockwood has no such "weapon" to enter his house (18). However, they are not actually going home; they are going to a chapel where Jabes Branderham is preaching, and much extraneous detail is given about Jabes's salary and the state of the chapel itself (childhood memories of hearing the Reverend Patrick Brontë grouse about his salary and the state of the church and parsonage?). After a long, boring sermon, Lockwood objects, and the entire assembly suddenly arises and starts to beat him; the churchgoers have sticks, but he does not. Castration anxiety and a very blatant beating fantasy begin the novel; I ask my students if it isn't fair to ask if the text itself functions as dream work to resolve the repressed childhood memory of abuse, of being dragged unwillingly to church and then subjected to the demands of social conformity that Emily Brontë understood as a form of psychological abuse.

The third technique exhibited in dream work is representability, or "figurability," the tendency to transform thoughts into visual elements. ("I was stuck in a church and beaten by the congregation" might mean "I am overwhelmed with and angry about the demands to be the pastor's perfect daughter.") Literary critics as well as students who are attuned to psychoanalytic approaches to texts can distinguish between what is known as the manifest content of the dream ("I am in a church") and the latent content (the buried meaning that I am attributing to the dream just described). The two levels combine to form what is known as the dream work (the resolution or release that takes place in the psyche of the dreamer). As Freud notes,

> at bottom dreams are nothing other than a particular form of thinking, made possible by the conditions of the state of sleep. It is the dream-work that creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming—the explanation of its peculiar nature. (*Interpretation* 649–50)[6]

Finally, what Freud called the secondary revision makes something whole and more or less coherent out of the distorted product of the dream work. Consider Lockwood's second dream as an example of how secondary revision functions. In this much shorter dream, Lockwood falls back asleep and dreams that the tree branch is still scratching the windowpane. He gets up to stop the noise, unlocks the window, and suddenly grabs or is grabbed by ice-cold fingers (note the uncertainty about agency here). The horrible cry, "Let me in—let me in!" is followed by a voice that identifies herself as "Catherine Linton. . . . I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor!" (20). Lockwood, claiming that terror made him cruel, relates that he pulled the wrist over the broken glass pane until it bled, soaking his bed clothes. When he is given the chance to let go of the hand, he does so, but shuts the pitiable creature out of the house, forcing her to be uncanny, homeless. This particular dream neatly brings together castration anxiety once more (cutting the hand over glass), another beating fantasy (complete with a woman's sacrificial blood), the search for the home of one's origins (primal scene reenactment), and that constantly annoying tree branch (primeval nature struggling continually to uproot and assault what we construct as civilization, a reference to the moors, which are superior to the heaven that will figure later in Cathy's dream). Lockwood's two dreams could be read together, as one extended dream work and as a manifestation of the unresolved residue of Cathy's traumas—losing her childhood home and identity to an artificial one imposed by marriage to a stranger, a man outside her endogamous family.[7]

Students frequently ask how we can understand a phenomenon like dreams, which appear repeatedly and in different ways. My response is always to stress the context in which an action or pattern occurs. Of course, as a teacher I am reminded of what Freud said to his critics about the notorious fuzziness of his concepts—tails I win, heads you lose. It is also necessary to address the primary turf of any psychoanalytic critic, the author's biography. This is contested and controversial ground, and I can understand teachers who do not want to venture into speculating about an author's intentions or the text as a manifestation or "working through" of an event in an author's life. Again, my position is that it is almost impossible to understand literary texts as psychological documents without delving into the author's life history.

Wuthering Heights is a strange novel to read, even stranger perhaps to teach. Clearly, fantasies and traumas swirl through the text, and what is one to make of them? The text is like a cry from the walking wounded. By providing students with at least five literary psychological case studies of how trauma displaces itself into fantasy, as well as a treasure trove of dreams, I help them see how literature expresses both the desires and the nightmares of life.

NOTES

¹My course syllabi are available at www.marquette.edu/english/faculty/hoeveler .shtml.

²See Bettelheim. The most accessible text for the fairy tales is Zipes.

³Freud's theories are most succinctly presented in Laplanche and Pontalis 22.

⁴For a collection of Brontë's poetry placed in context with the novel, see my edition of *Wuthering Heights*. In addition to the novel and poems, my essay in that volume, "*Wuthering Heights* and Gothic Feminism," develops more fully my reading of the psychodynamics in the novel.

⁵See also www.sla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/psychoanalysis/definitions/ condensation.

⁶See also John Phillips, at http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/dreamwork.htm.

⁷For a fuller discussion on the theory of the phantom, see Abraham.

APPENDIX

Internet Sources for Definitions
of Psychological Terms and Concepts

Durbin, Paul G. 14 Dec. 2005 <http://www.hypnos.co.uk/hypnomag/pdurbin7.htm>.

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Kaufmann, Doug. "Psychology Glossary." *Alleydog.com*. 1999. Kaufmann Research and Consulting Group. 8 Sept. 2002. 14 Dec. 2005 <http://www.alleydog.com/ glossary/glossary.cfm>.