



An Impact of Freudian Defense Mechanisms within the Socio-Cultural Context in *Wuthering Heights*

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Abstract: This research offers a brief understanding of the study's goals in examining defense mechanisms within the framework of the societal norms. Through a psychoanalytic lens, this research explores the complex network of defense mechanisms presented in Emily Bronte's masterwork, *Wuthering Heights*. Through an analysis of the defense mechanisms employed by the characters in the novel, the study seeks to shed light on domestic violence. This analysis explores the defense mechanisms of important characters by referencing psychoanalytical Freudian ideas. This research aims to dissect the psychological underpinnings and complexities of the characters' defense mechanisms, shedding light on their internal conflicts, trauma, and subconscious coping strategies through close textual analysis and an in-depth examination of character behaviors and motivations. Furthermore, the goal of this study is to highlight the contextual and sociocultural aspects that support the adoption and development of defense mechanisms inside the story.

Keywords: Societal Norms, Defense Mechanisms, *Wuthering Heights* and Domestic Violence.

Introduction

The global epidemic of violence against women and girls still results in deaths, torture, and physical, psychological, sexual, and financial harm. It is one of the most widespread abuses of human rights, depriving women and girls of their rights to equality, safety, self-worth, dignity, and the enjoyment of basic freedoms. Every nation has violence against women; it has no bounds when it comes to culture, class, education, income, race, or age. Despite the fact that the majority of nations forbid violence against women, the truth is that abuses of women's human rights are frequently excused by cultural customs or norms or by misunderstandings of religion teachings. Furthermore, when the abuse occurs within the home, as is frequently the case, it is effectively excused by the state's and the law enforcement apparatus's silent complacency (Kapoor, 2000).

Any incident or string of incidents of authoritative, repressive, or intimidating conduct, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or siblings, regardless of gender or sexuality is how the UK government classifies domestic violence and abuse. The abuse might be emotional, financial, intimate, physical, or psychological, among other things. Domestic abuse is a global issue that violates human rights and transcends national, regional, religious, social, and economic barriers. Women who are victims of violence are denied the opportunity to fully participate in social and economic life. It leads to a plethora of problems with both physical and mental health, and occasionally it even takes lives. The development of initiatives to combat domestic violence is hampered by a lack of knowledge about the scope of the problem,

its origins and effects, as well as the trends and patterns that exist across cultural boundaries (Stark, 2012).

In a variety of nations, the term 'domestic violence' refers to violence between partners, but it can also refer to abuse of children or elders, or abuse by any member of the household (Bojaruniec, 2019). A pattern of abusive and threatening behaviors, known as domestic violence, can involve coercion, harassment, isolation, and physical, emotional, and sexual assault in addition to other forms of violence. Threats of violence, bodily assault, attacks on property or pets, intimidation tactics, emotional abuse, seclusion, and the use of children as a tool for control are all examples of domestic violence (Ganley, 1995). A woman experiencing domestic violence is subjected to a pattern of threatening or controlling behavior by her intimate partner, with little respect for her body, rights, feelings, or health, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. A woman is considered to have experienced abuse if she has been the victim of purposeful, frequently recurring physical, sexual, or psychological harm by someone she is or has been in a close relationship with (Tello, 2016).

When considering psychological defensive mechanisms from the standpoint of an evolved strategy, dissociation and cognitive distortions are suggested to be the two fundamental templates. Although these psychological phenomena are often thought of as abnormal, they actually represent overlapping spectrums, with more severe variations being less prevalent and usually dysfunctional, and milder forms being common and highly functional. Dissociation gives one the ability to adaptively separate from upsetting emotional states, whereas cognitive distortions give

experiences an ego-boosting positive interpretation. The majority of the traditional defense mechanisms that are discussed in the literature on psychoanalysis are actually forms of cognitive distortion, some of which have significant dissociative components (Bowins, 2004).

Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is a perfect subject for psychoanalytic study because it is a turbulent story full of complex character interactions. This study makes use of a psychoanalytic framework to analyze the domestic violence of the novel's characters, with a special emphasis on Sigmund Freud's defense mechanisms. Through the use of close literary analysis, the inquiry explores key scenes and character interactions in order to find examples of defense mechanisms influencing the motivations and behaviors of the characters. Additionally, the study places these psychological defenses in the sociocultural context of the novel's setting by taking into account family relationships, societal conventions, and restraints that were common in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The topic of domestic violence in Emily Bronte's book *Wuthering Heights* is investigated in this study. Only a small number of the characters in the book have maintained their happiness while the others have experienced various forms of violence. Every character suffers as a result of Heathcliff exacting revenge for his past mistreatment, and the book is filled with graphic details. Children and the elderly are also victims of violence in this novel, in addition to women. Heathcliff even killed Isabella, his wife, in an attempt to intimidate her another instance of domestic abuse.

Problem Statement

Domestic violence is a severe problem that impedes societal progress and breaches human rights in today's society. It also contributes to certain psychiatric illnesses. Domestic violence can also refer to violence against any member of the family, not just partners. The current study investigates Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* from a psychoanalytic perspective, as well as the reasons and causes of domestic violence to be consistent with the novel. The characters experience domestic violence from birth to death, from childhood to maturity, and from the start of the book to the finish. Therefore, it is imperative to approach the subject from a psychoanalytic standpoint in order to identify potential causes and remedies.

Research Questions

1. How do Freudian defense mechanisms manifest in the behaviors of leading characters, contributing to instances of domestic violence within *Wuthering Heights*?
2. How do societal norms contribute to the characters' adoption of defense mechanisms and their expression of domestic violence within the socio-cultural context depicted in *Wuthering Heights*?

Rationale

The views of Sigmund Freud are still relevant in psychology and literature. The utilization of Freudian principles in literary analysis contributes to a deeper comprehension of the novel and underscores the lasting significance of Freud's psychoanalytic theories. This study investigates human rights violations one of the prevalent and grave problems that persist even

in contemporary society. The research also examines domestic violence in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* from a psychoanalytical perspective especially defense mechanism. The examination of Freudian defensive mechanisms in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, depiction of domestic violence offers an important look into the intricate psychological makeup of the characters and their relationships. Understanding how Freudian defensive mechanisms appear in the actions of the book's protagonists Heathcliff and Catherine in particular and how they contribute to the story's portrayal of abusive dynamics and domestic violence is the central challenge of this research. The sole aim of this research is to analyze how societal norms, repressive environments, and cultural expectations shape the characters' psychological responses and the manifestation of defense mechanisms within abusive relationships.

Basically, the goal of this research is to find out how the characters' psyches by using Freudian defense mechanisms framework to shape their actions and interactions, especially when it comes to domestic violence and how it is portrayed in *Wuthering Heights*. Particularly Heathcliff and Catherine, the protagonists in *Wuthering Heights*, have complex personalities and actions. By examining defense mechanisms under a Freudian perspective, one might gain deeper insight into the characters' underlying motivations and actions. In order to gather, examine, and comprehend the psychoanalytic perspective on domestic violence in Charlotte Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights*, this study uses a qualitative research methodology. The *Wuthering Heights* text is analyzed using the close reading technique. The psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud serves as the theoretical foundation for the current investigation. This study examines the text and identifies the defense mechanism(s) that best fit the research and provide an explanation of the causes of domestic violence in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*.

Literature Review

Researchers discovered some earlier studies that are relevant to the subject while gathering data for this one. *The study Id Ego Superego Analysis of Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights of the Angle Psychology* was conducted by Shumei Gao. Her research was centered on analyzing Heathcliff, Catherine, and Edger. She discovered that while the two are the ego and superego, respectively, Heathcliff has an Id personality. From enticing Isabella Linton to marry him to seizing Thrushcross Grange and *Wuthering Heights* for himself and ultimately achieving his retribution, Heathcliff achieves what he wants. When he seeks retribution, he disregards all moral principles, laws, and ethics, viewing them as an unconscious aspect of his libido-fueled personality (Gao, 2006).

The study also examined a body of work titled *The Analysis of Heathcliff Character in Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte: A Sigmund Freud's Theory* that examined Heathcliff's persona whereby the authors discovered that. Heathcliff is an example of an id personality rude, illogical, vengeful, and devoid of faith in God (Mamal, 2017).

A study titled *Psychosocial Study of Domestic Violence- A Covid 19 Lockdown Version* was conducted during lockdown which said, An abuse victim receives from an intimate partner is the simplest definition of domestic violence. The three categories into which this abuse is typically divided are physical, emotional,

and sexual. A June 22, 2020, story in the Hindu newspaper states that 1,477 accusations of domestic violence were filed by women between March 25 and May 31, 2020. A higher number of complaints were filed over this 68-day period than were filed throughout the previous ten years between March and May. While this is undoubtedly a concerning figure, the survey also notes that "roughly 60% of women who experienced violence never sought help, and 77% of the victims did not even mention the incident(s) to anyone." This last point deserves particular emphasis (Priyadharshini, 2020).

Any violence or abuse that takes place in a domestic environment, like a marriage or cohabitation, is referred to as domestic violence (also known as domestic abuse or family violence). In the current study, domestic violence is defined broadly in compliance with certain standards. Domestic violence encompasses all forms of violence within the home, not only beatings and assaults by a partner (Bosede, 2013). Together, these theories and therapeutic approaches which address the unconscious mind in part make up psychoanalysis, a modality used to treat mental illnesses. The interaction of the conscious and unconscious minds is known as psychoanalysis or psychoanalytic study. Repressed emotions and desires might occasionally find their way into our conscious minds and manifest violently (Balint, 1950).

According to psychoanalytic theory, a defense mechanism is an unconscious psychological process that keeps a person safe from thoughts and sensations that cause anxiety that are connected to internal conflicts and external pressures. The study *Id Ego Superego Analysis of Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights of the Angle Psychology* was conducted by Shumei Gao. Her research was centered on analyzing Heathcliff, Catherine, and Edger. She discovered that while the two are the ego and superego, respectively, Heathcliff has an Id personality "Heathcliff does anything he wants, from seducing Isabella Linton into marriage to claiming Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights as his own and ultimately achieving his retribution. When he seeks retribution, he disregards all moral principles, laws, and ethics, viewing them as an unconscious aspect of his libido (Mehdi, 2020).

In 2016, Stageland Allison conducted a study which had the topic *Rethinking Domestic Violence in Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights at Trinity College: He Could Have Settled Her With a Well-Planted Blow*. Allison examined domestic violence in Jane Eyre in her study, which was previously mentioned. Her research revealed that Jane Eyre is rife with domestic abuse from start to finish. She used a quote from Jane Eyre's first chapter, which highlights how prevalent the problem is throughout the whole book (Stegeland, 2015). He constantly tormented and beat me; not just once or twice a week, but every day as well; he made every nerve in my body tremble and made every piece of flesh on my bones tremble. There were times when the horror he instilled confused me since I had no defense whatsoever against his threats or his inflictions. The prevalence of domestic violence in society is rising daily. A person is not only physically impacted, but also emotionally and psychologically (Arab, 2018).

Sucharita Maji (2022) conducted a study named *"Domestic Violence during COVID-19 Pandemic: The case study for Indian women"* in December 2022. The study investigated the existence of domestic violence and found that it was becoming worse at an alarming rate during the COVID-19 epidemic. The

term "double pandemic," "shadow pandemic," "hidden pandemic," and "the other pandemic" were used to describe its global spread. Newspapers and articles that have been published provided the data for this investigation. Three newspapers provided the data. The Times of India, the Hindu, and Dainik Jargon. The conclusion said as follows: "In the months of April, May, and June of 2020, there were more articles published overall about domestic violence in these three newspapers than there have ever been in these three months on domestic violence." The fact that so many pieces have been published indicates how serious the situation is (Maji, 2022). The problem of domestic violence must be addressed. A family member will be aware of domestic abuse, but he or she might not be able to provide a good explanation or figure out why a family member is torturing others. A person who has been well-adopted and cared for may not be the cause of domestic abuse, but a horrible person who experiences abuse and maltreatment as a child may grow up to be violent. It indicates that there is a connection between a person's psyche or unconscious mind and domestic violence.

Desiree S.Ficula conducted a study in 2011 titled *Psychoanalysis and The Men's Center: A Domestic Violence Approach*. wherein it was discovered that unconsciousness is crucial. A treatment for domestic abusers that takes a psychoanalytic approach aims to alter not just the perpetrators' actions and behavior but also the psyche, which is the source of these behaviors. Furthermore, the study claimed that the Oedipus complex is specifically taken into consideration when examining a man's youth, which has an impact on the unconscious. The bond between a child and their caregiver is very important and influences the child's unconscious and potential issues with attachment and relationships in the future (Ficula, 2011). The aforementioned FICULA study demonstrated the inseparability of childhood or the unconscious mind from domestic violence. Emily Bronte depicts domestic violence in *Wuthering Heights*. Even though he is violent now, Heathcliff experienced violence as a child.

In December 2018, Golan Hasan conducted a second study titled *Psychological Approach to the Defense Mechanism of the Main Characters in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights*. According to the study, Heathcliff represents the Id Mind. "He achieved his goals. By seducing Isabella Linton to marry him in order to seize control of Wuthering Heights, he was able to exact revenge on Catherine. In his early years, Heathcliff was described as an orphan who was taken in by Mr. Earnshaw and reared in Wuthering Heights with other Earnshaw family members as if he were his own. After being abandoned by his birth parents, Heathcliff developed a positive but free-spirited disposition. These elements played a significant role in shaping his ID performance (Hasan, 2018). Since this research mostly concentrates on Heathcliff's personality, we have chosen him from the aforementioned research because he uses the suffering of other characters as justification for getting even.

Data Analysis

When Freudian defensive mechanisms are examined in the context of domestic abuse in *Wuthering Heights*, intricate character dynamics become visible. In result, examining the Freudian defensive mechanisms in *Wuthering Heights* offers a prism through which to view the complex psychological dynamics underlying the characters' behavior, particularly in relation to domestic abuse. It

demonstrates how these strategies affect their interactions with one another, their behavior, and the way abusive dynamics are portrayed in the story.

"Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not is he a devil" (Brontë, 1847).

The novel's Isabella, Heathcliff's wife, says the passage above after experiencing such severe and cruel treatment from her husband that she begins to doubt his humanity. Calling a husband crazy or the devil indicates that Isabella is treated so harshly that she refuses to acknowledge him as a person, even if he is a human. She believes he is not a human, and if he is, he may be insane.

"A monster, and not a human being" (Brontë, 1847).

By using textual allusions, the novel further elucidates the concept of physical domestic abuse. The quotation above details Heathcliff's behavior toward his wife. He is referred to as the "Monster" because of the way he handles her. Physical domestic abuse is demonstrated by the facts and citations stated above. Using the previously mentioned analysis as a guide, the researchers discovered that one of the main forms of domestic violence in Wuthering Heights that occurs in the book is physical violence.

One of the main forms of domestic abuse that *Wuthering Heights* uses is isolation. The act of distancing oneself from other people is called isolation. It is a form of domestic abuse that can impede someone's growth on the mental or physical levels. Some of the solitary characters in Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* experienced this exact type of brutality. In order to force Catherine to wed Linton, Heathcliff's son, Heathcliff locked Nelly and Catherine the second, Edgar's daughter, in a single chamber. The goal of doing this exact conduct was to obtain Edgar's possessions. One of the key elements that emphasizes the characters' isolation and makes it clear that they have experienced this kind of violence is the scenario mentioned above.

"Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit with us" (Brontë, 1847).

The sentences above illustrate Hindley's seclusion of Heathcliff. Heathcliff is secluded by Hindley. He won't even let him join them at their table. It is considered a form of domestic violence since it violates his rights and involves isolation.

"He says, he and I must not play together" (Brontë, 1847).

This passage from the novel's text also alludes to Heathcliff's complete seclusion. Hindley forbids him from playing with Catherine. Being secluded, Heathcliff is not permitted to play with them, eat with them, or even sit with them. Another form of domestic abuse that occurs in the book *Wuthering Heights* is isolation. The considerations raised above and the examples from the book demonstrate that isolation which is one of the main forms of domestic violence occurs in the book.

A domestic violence of attack against property and pets has also been analyzed in this study. In the book, Heathcliff commits acts of brutality of this nature. He attacked his wife's pet dog with the intention of threatening her. The sole intention behind Heathcliff's deed of hanging his wife's dog in front of her was to threaten her. To expropriate, Heathcliff also launched an attack on Edgar's property. Because she was the only heir to Edgar's estate, Heathcliff coerced Catherine into an adulterous marriage with his son. He may steal their possessions by acting in this way. The

novel contains instances of domestic violence, such as attacks on property and pets.

The novel's initial chapters include evidence that Heathcliff is experiencing violence, as shown by the following quotes from Catherine:

"I wish my father were back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute his conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious_H and I are going to rebel_we took our initiatory step this evening".

"You forget you have a master here; says the tyrant. I'll demolish the first who puts me out of temper". (Bronte, 1847).

The character Hindley, who is described as despicable and a tyrant in the text quotes above, is introduced to us in these lines. The aforementioned passages from *Wuthering Heights*, Chapter 3, page 33, demonstrate the presence of marital violence in the book. The following texts shed additional light on Hindley's violent nature:

"Hindley hurried up from his paradise on the hearth, and seizing one of us by the collar, and the other by the arm, hurled both into the back kitchen. he must have some ups and downs in life to make him such a churl!" (Bronte, 1847).

The narrative of the book switches back and forth. First, the parts of the book where Heathcliff was enduring violence were presented to us. Next, the parts when Heathcliff is acting violently and other characters are also experiencing violence are presented to us. The above citations reveal Heathcliff's character who is now revengeful for whatever he faced.

"Miss Cathy and he were now very thick; but Hindley hated him". He would stand Hindley's blows without winking or shedding a tear, and my pinches moved him only to draw in a breath and open his eyes, as if he had hurt himself by accident and nobody was to blame". (Bronte, 1847)

Domestic abuse is made abundantly evident in *Wuthering Heights* via these passages from the book. From this moment on, Heathcliff encountered every kind of violence depicted in the book. Compared to other forms of violence, he experienced physical violence more frequently. Because Heathcliff's adoptive father Earnshaw loves him, Hindley finds this intolerable and intends to cause Heathcliff as much misery as he can.

"I shall tell your father of the three thrashings you're given me this week, and show him my arm, which is black to the shoulder. He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate" (Bronte, 1847).

Following Earnshaw's death, Heathcliff encountered greater difficulties. Heathcliff is now being repeatedly beaten by Hindley and is powerless to defend himself. He endures severe physical pain.

"Tell her what Heathcliff is: an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation: an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone, He is a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. "He'd crush you like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge". (Bronte, 1847)

The citations above demonstrate Heathcliff's violent tendencies. At the end of the book, Heathcliff became violent due to the difficulties he had endured.

"Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not is he a devil". (Bronte, 1847)

The wife of Heathcliff, Isabella, says these words. The sentences convey Isabella's animosity toward Heathcliff. Heathcliff has terrible behavior toward his wife. He even killed her dog and beats and threatens her. These statements make clear that Heathcliff forced her wife to endure all types of domestic abuse:

"He's a lying fiend! A monster, and not a human being; I've been told I might leave him before; and but I dare not repeat it". Every inch of me is as sour as if I had been fighting with a legion of imps!It struck beneath my ear, and stopped the sentence I was uttering" (Bronte, 1847).

Every quotation from the book that is covered in this chapter demonstrates domestic abuse in a straightforward manner. First of all, as was already said, Heathcliff was frequently beaten throughout the book. Second, after growing up and gaining the ability to get revenge on Hindley, Heathcliff began torturing the man. After Hindley, he also tormented Hindley's son, Hareton. At last, Heathcliff forced his wife to flee from him by torturing her. In order to exact revenge on Edgar Linton, Isabella's brother, who wed Heathcliff's true love, Catherine, he tormented his wife.

Violent behavior might also result from the usage of defense mechanisms. Various characters in *Wuthering Heights* employ defense systems to shield themselves from uncontrollable urges and actions, whether those of others or themselves. Hindley makes use of a displacement defensive system. Hindley did not like Heathcliff when he was brought home, but she could not stand it since her father did. As a result, Hindley began to despise Heathcliff and was attempting to shield himself from fear since Heathcliff was more important to Mr. Earnshaw than Hindley. As a result of Hindley's poor treatment of him, Heathcliff also employs the displacement defense mechanism. Edgar Linton, the son of Hindley, who married Heathcliff's true love, Catherine, wronged Heathcliff by marrying her. Thus, in an attempt to get revenge on Linton, Heathcliff wed Linton's sister Isabella with the intention of turning Edgar's anger toward Isabella. It will allow Heathcliff to exact revenge on Edgar.

The aforementioned quotation from Berry's work helps to understand the psychoanalytic perspective on domestic violence across the entire book. As Freud famously observed, "There is always a return of the repressed." The violent characters in the book suppressed wishes, fears, and desires from their early years, which later sought a way back into conscious mind and forced them to confront what they faced. Heathcliff was repressed by Hindley, and upon his return, he repressed Hareton and the other characters in order to exact revenge and appease his wrath.

Conclusion

This research examined Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* from a psychoanalytic perspective in order to examine domestic violence. This research identified several significant forms of domestic abuse. There are three major types of domestic violence done in the novel. Which are: physical violence, Isolation and attack against pets. A deeper comprehension of the

complex psychological dynamics of the characters in *Wuthering Heights* can be gained by investigating Freudian defensive mechanisms in the setting of domestic abuse. The examination of Freudian defense mechanisms in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* sheds light on the intricate relationship between psychology, relationships, and domestic violence. The characters' actions are intricately linked to their psychological complexity and unsolved emotional difficulties, particularly Heathcliff's mistreatment of Isabella Linton. The turbulent relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff acts as a central theme, illustrating how their psychological issues on the inside show themselves as harmful behaviors that continue abusive cycles. Because of his painful history and unfulfilled love for Catherine, Heathcliff is a vindictive person who takes out his frustrations and abuse on Isabella. Throughout a similar vein, Catherine's internal struggles with her love for Heathcliff and her obligations to society push her to suppress her own emotions, which obliquely fuels the turbulent relationships and emotional upheaval throughout the story.

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