



ज्ञानविविधा

कला, मानविकी और सामाजिक विज्ञान की सहकर्म-समीक्षित, मूल्यांकित, त्रैमासिक शोध पत्रिका

ISSN : 3048-4537(Online)

3049-2327(Print)

IIFS Impact Factor-2.25

Vol.-2; Issue-3 (July-Sept.) 2025

Page No.- 43-57

©2025 Gyanvidha

<https://journal.gyanvidha.com>

Hanuman Prasad Gurjar

Assistant Professor,
Bhagwan Adinath Jai Raj
Marwara Govt. College
Nainwa.

Corresponding Author :

Hanuman Prasad Gurjar

Assistant Professor,
Bhagwan Adinath Jai Raj
Marwara Govt. College
Nainwa.

Love, Obsession, and Attachment: A Psychological Examination of Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights and Ian McEwan's Enduring Love

I. Introduction :

Context & Rationale : From the storm-tossed moors of 19th-century England to the carefully calibrated prose of late-20th-century London, writers have long probed the darker dimensions of love: its capacity to soothe and its power to consume. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) remains a cornerstone of Victorian fiction, not only for its wild setting and intense passion but for its portrayal of love as an almost elemental force, intertwined with vengeance and identity (Islam 2014). Nearly one and a half centuries later, Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997) examines obsession through the lens of a sudden trauma and its lingering psychological aftermath, demonstrating that the fine line between devotion and pathology persists in our own era (Shiva 2024). By juxtaposing these two works—one canonical and Gothic, the other contemporary and psychological—this paper highlights how both novels dramatize attachment and obsession as fundamental human drives.

Research Objectives & Questions

This study asks three central questions:

1. Freudian Constructs: How do Freud's notions of the id, ego, and superego inform Heathcliff's and Catherine's tempestuous relationship in *Wuthering Heights*? (Islam 2014; Stenstrand 2006)
2. Attachment Theory: In what ways do early bonds with caregivers shape adult attachments and romantic entanglements in both novels? (Johnson 2015)
3. Pathological Obsession : How is obsessive love depicted as a clinical or near-clinical phenomenon in each text? (Hadzic 2017; Shiva 2024)

Structure of the Paper

Following this introduction, Section II outlines our theoretical framework—Freudian psychoanalysis, attachment theory, and object-relations. Sections III and IV review key studies on *Wuthering Heights* and *Enduring Love*, respectively, demonstrating how each novel stages love as both necessity and pathology. Section V offers a cross-textual comparison, while Section VI details our qualitative methodology. Section VII discusses the implications of our findings, and Section VIII concludes by reflecting on the broader significance of obsessive attachment in literature and psychology.

II. Theoretical Framework

To analyze the psychological underpinnings of love, obsession, and attachment in *Wuthering Heights* and *Enduring*

Love, this study draws on four complementary frameworks : Freudian psychoanalysis, attachment theory, object relations, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Each offers a distinct lens through which to interpret characters' drives, bonds, and pathological fixations.

Freudian Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud emphasized that much of human behavior is governed by unconscious drives—particularly the life (Eros) and death (Thanatos) instincts—and that unresolved conflicts often manifest as repetition compulsion, the tendency to reenact traumatic experiences (Islam 2014; Dzahini 2024). In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's relentless return to the moors and his vengeful pursuit of Cathy's legacy can be read as an enactment of buried rage and desire, propelled by primitive id impulses. Similarly, in *Enduring Love*, Jed Parry's obsessive stalking exemplifies compulsive repetition of a single traumatic moment, reflecting an inability to integrate ego-control over overwhelming libidinal and death drives.

Attachment Theory

Originating with Bowlby and later expanded by Ainsworth, attachment theory posits that early interactions with caregivers yield "secure" or "insecure" attachment styles, which in turn shape adult relationships (Johnson 2015). A

secure child, having internalized a reliable attachment figure, is more able to regulate emotion and seek healthy intimacy; an insecure child often oscillates between clinginess and avoidance. In Brontë's novel, Heathcliff's orphaned beginnings and Cathy's split loyalties to her Earnshaw and Linton families foster disorganized, ambivalent attachments that metastasize into obsessive adult love. In McEwan's text, Joe's professional composure unravels when confronted with Jed's abandonment anxiety, revealing latent attachment anxieties rooted in his own familial history.

Object Relations :

Building on psychoanalytic roots, object relations theory focuses on the internalized "objects" (mental representations of self and other) that dominate interpersonal dynamics (Ahmed 2022). Healthy relations involve integrated, realistic internal objects; pathological relations are marked by splitting and projection. Heathcliff's demonization of Edgar Linton and idealization of Cathy reflect a split internal world, while Parry's fixation on Joe as his "true object" arises from his inability to differentiate self and other, turning Joe into a repository for his displaced love.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow theorized that human motivation follows a pyramid from

physiological needs through safety, love/belonging, esteem, to self-actualization. Love and belonging needs—intimate relationships and social belonging—sit at the third level, while esteem needs involve achievement and recognition (Dai 2023). In both novels, characters' quests for love often substitute for thwarted esteem or self-actualization: Heathcliff seeks Cathy's love to validate his worth; Joe pursues rational mastery to restore his professional esteem after trauma. When love cannot fulfill deeper needs, obsession and pathological behaviors emerge as maladaptive attempts to satisfy unmet drives.

Together, these frameworks provide a robust structure for interpreting how *Wuthering Heights* and *Enduring Love* dramatize the spectrum from healthy attachment to pathological obsession.

III. Literature Review: Wuthering Heights :

1. Freudian Core Issues

Emily Brontë's novel is steeped in manifestations of what Freud termed "core issues": fear of abandonment, low self-esteem, insecure sense of self, and in particular, the unconscious pull of mother fixation (Islam 2014). Heathcliff embodies the id unleashed—his every move propelled by a dysregulated libidinal drive for revenge and love, untrammelled by

moral restraint. When Catherine marries Edgar Linton, Heathcliff is plunged into a frenzy of vindictive action: he kidnaps Hareton, ruins Hindley through gambling, and torments Isabella Linton—all logical from his perspective, because in the id's domain there is no prohibition, only the pursuit of instinctual pleasure (Dzahini 2020). Yet even as Heathcliff wreaks havoc, moments of tacit self-rebuke suggest a superego incipiently at work—his grief after Catherine's death borders on self-punishment, hinting that societal and internalized moral codes occasionally intrude upon his unconscious drives.

2. Id-Ego-Superego Dynamics in Cathy
Catherine Earnshaw stands as the ego caught between two extremes: her passionate self that yearns to merge with Heathcliff, and her cultivated persona that must adhere to Thrushcross Grange's social decorum (Stenstrand 2006). Stenstrand's analysis positions Cathy as the novel's ego-figure, mediating between Heathcliff's raw id impulses and Edgar's superego-like embodiment of Victorian propriety. When Cathy admits "I am Heathcliff," she surrenders to id's primacy; when she insists on marrying Edgar to secure social standing, she bows to the superego's rules. Her inner turmoil—shifting violently between elation and remorse—epitomizes the

ego's strain in balancing instinct and idealized conscience.

3. Attachment & Early Trauma

Bowlby's attachment theory underscores how early bonds with caregivers shape later relational patterns. Heathcliff arrives at Wuthering Heights as an orphan, severed from any maternal figure and alternately embraced and scorned by the Earnshaw siblings. This inconsistent caregiving fosters a disorganized attachment—he alternates between clinging to Cathy and lashing out at Hindley and Edgar (Johnson 2015). Cathy's upbringing, split between Earnshaw's wild moors and Linton's genteel salons, leaves her torn between loyalty and ambition, producing an ambivalent attachment style in which love and betrayal entwine (Alnasser 2024). Their childhood traumas—Heathcliff's abandonment and Cathy's divided loyalties—lay the groundwork for the obsessive adult bond that dominates the narrative.

4. Borderline Traits & Conflicted Loyalties
Recent psychoanalytic readings identify in Cathy characteristics akin to borderline personality features: intense fear of abandonment, rapid shifts in self-image, and episodes of self-destructive behavior (Alnasser 2024). Her impulsive marriage to Edgar, followed by immediate regret and self-starvation, signals abandonment panic. Cathy's vacillation—one moment

exulting in Heathcliff's company, the next recoiling in horror—reflects unstable identity and affect dysregulation. These traits intensify the novel's emotional volatility, illustrating how unresolved childhood conflicts can manifest as borderline dynamics in romantic relationships.

5. Obsessive Love & Addiction

Heathcliff's devotion to Cathy transcends ordinary passion, veering into pathological obsession. Hadzic (2017) argues that his love resembles addiction: he continually re-enacts phases of their relationship as if seeking a permanent "fix," moving from fierce adoration to vengeful hatred and back again. This cyclical pattern mirrors substance dependence: the more Heathcliff tries to possess Cathy—even posthumously—the more he punishes himself through loss and guilt. In parallel, Enrique Brown (1996) reads Heathcliff's behavior through the lens of addiction psychology, noting how compulsive pursuit of an object of desire can supplant all other needs, driving destructive choices. Thus, love and addiction become two sides of the same pathological coin in *Wuthering Heights*.

6. Hierarchy of Needs & Character Motivation

Applying Maslow's model, Heathcliff's trajectory tracks a relentless ascent from baseline security needs to twisted self-

actualization drives (Dai 2023). Denied a stable family identity (physiological and safety needs), he stakes everything on love and belonging—first with Catherine, then with the Earnshaw estate itself. Once bonded to Thrushcross Grange and *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff pursues esteem through dominance and vengeance. Only when he finally controls both properties and inflicts suffering upon his rivals does he attain a hollow form of self-actualization, tragically devoid of genuine intimacy. Maslow's framework thus illuminates how unmet lower-order needs can metastasize into pathological quests for validation.

7. Psychological Time

Brontë's nonlinear narrative structure enacts a "psychological time" mirroring Heathcliff's and Cathy's refusal of chronological boundaries (Ghazi 2005). Harris (1980) observes that the lovers experience past, present, and future as a seamless vortex: Heathcliff repeatedly reexperiences childhood rejection; Cathy's ghost returns two decades later as if no time has passed. This temporal simultaneity reinforces their obsessive bond, as they inhabit a shared interior reality that transcends calendar time. The novel's frame-within-frame narration—Lockwood's present visits, Nelly's retrospection, and the lovers' mythic timelessness—embodies this split tempo-

ral consciousness, underscoring how obsession arrests healthy progression through time.

These studies collectively demonstrate that *Wuthering Heights* stages love not as benign attachment but as an interplay of unconscious drives, early trauma, and pathological repetition. Through Freudian, attachment, object-relations, and humanistic lenses, Heathcliff and Cathy emerge as embodiments of love's potential both to nurture and to destroy.

IV. Literature Review: Enduring Love

1. Psychoanalytical Investigation

In *Enduring Love*, the initial balloon accident functions as a traumatic catalyst that unleashes latent unconscious forces, mirroring Freud's concepts of projection and transference (McCarthy 2025). Joe Rose, the novel's narrator, prides himself on rational detachment—he is a science writer who meticulously quantifies risk—yet when Jed Parry fixes him with a gaze of worship, Joe becomes an unwitting receptacle for Jed's displaced libidinal energy. McCarthy's psychoanalytical study demonstrates how Jed projects his unmet infantile needs onto Joe, recasting their chance encounter as a fateful bond that must be endlessly replayed (McCarthy 2025). Joe, in turn, transfers his own anxieties about mortality and control into an obsession with dispelling Parry's delusions. Their relationship thus

embodies a mutual reenactment of trauma, with Joe oscillating between empathy and revulsion as he navigates the transferential field set by Jed's mania.

2. Object Relations Theory

Salma Ahmed's application of object relations theory reveals that Jed Parry's fixation on Joe emerges from an impoverished internal world lacking stable "good" objects (Ahmed 2022). Having lost his wife, Jed seeks to internalize Joe as an idealized attachment figure, attributing to him qualities of safety, intimacy, and spiritual purpose. Joe becomes a container for Jed's fractured self, a living emblem of Jed's desperate quest for reunion with an object lost to death. Ahmed argues that Parry's scripted dialogues—invoking St. Paul and missionary rhetoric—serve to enforce Joe's role as savior, collapsing boundaries between self and other. This pathological merger highlights how distorted internal objects can drive stalking behaviors: Jed's inability to distinguish Joe's autonomy from his own psychic needs transforms benign affection into an intrusive possession.

3. Psychological Conflicts & Coping

Avni Gupta's examination of Joe's psychological trajectory emphasizes the dialectic between his scientific rationality and the emotional breakdown precipitated by Jed's obsession (Gupta 2024).

Initially, Joe attempts classic cognitive coping strategies—journal writing, logical argumentation, even forensic risk assessment—to contain Parry’s advances. Yet as Jed’s demands escalate, Joe’s ego defenses falter: he experiences nightmares, panic attacks, and a creeping psychosomatic paralysis. Gupta shows how Anna, Joe’s partner, embodies the secure attachment figure he lacked in childhood, providing emotional scaffolding when his defenses collapse. Her presence reinscribes a healthy attachment pattern, contrasting sharply with Jed’s depredations. Nonetheless, Joe’s crisis underscores how even a well-regulated adult can relapse into insecurity when confronted with an attachment breach, forcing him to renegotiate his identity beyond mere scientific rationalism.

4. Empathy Deficits & Varieties of Love

Li Zhang’s study of empathy in *Enduring Love* distinguishes between reciprocal, nurturing love and Jed’s unidirectional fixation (Zhang 2019). Joe and Anna exchange empathic understanding: they listen, reassure, and adapt to each other’s fears. Jed, by contrast, operates within a one-sided paradigm of need: he demands complete emotional availability from Joe without offering mutual understanding or care. Zhang identifies this deficit as a hallmark of pathological love, where the lover’s gaze reduces the beloved to an

object of obsession rather than a subject with autonomy. This lack of empathic reciprocity not only exacerbates Joe’s distress but also violates fundamental norms of healthy attachment—highlighting how obsession in *Enduring Love* diverges from communal, intersubjective bonds.

5. Obsessive Limerence

Clinical parallels between Jed Parry’s behavior and the phenomenon of limerence have been drawn by both LitCharts (2016) and Raj Shiva (2024). Limerence describes an intrusive preoccupation with another person, marked by obsessive thoughts, fear of rejection, and hypervigilance to any sign of reciprocation. LitCharts’s thematic analysis maps seven stages of limerence onto Parry’s progression: initial attraction (the balloon crash), intensification (Parry’s letters and visits), despair (Joe’s rejections), and desperate attempts at reconciliation (Parry’s ritualized prayers). Shiva adds that Jed exhibits three red flags of unhealthy romantic obsession—emotional dependency, boundary violations, and persistent intrusive behavior—which coalesce in Parry’s nightly stakeouts and liturgical demands (Shiva 2024). These behaviors exceed mere romantic passion, signaling a psychiatric syndrome that destabilizes both parties.

6. Pathology of Pseudoscience

Hong-Shu Teng's analysis of Joe's struggle between empirical science and Jed's idiosyncratic beliefs illuminates a clash between methodological skepticism and pseudoscientific conviction (Teng 2019). As a rational narrator, Joe dismisses Parry's religious zeal as irrational—yet he cannot fully dislodge Parry's narrative, which reconfigures the balloon accident into a cosmic sign. Teng argues that Parry's invocation of scripture and prophecy operates like a self-fulfilling hallucination, a protective delusion against grief. Joe's attempts to subject Parry to psychiatric evaluation founder not on lack of evidence, but on Parry's unwavering faith in his own interpretive frame. The novel thus stages a broader conflict: the inadequacy of pure reason to contain the existential and psychic needs that pseudoscience—and, by extension, obsessive love—can fulfill.

Together, these studies reveal *Enduring Love* as a richly layered exploration of psychological dysfunction: projection and transference fuel the central bond; distorted internal objects animate stalking; coping mechanisms falter under attachment threats; empathy delineates healthy from pathological love; limerence provides a clinical template for obsession; and the clash between science and pseudoscience underscores the limits of

rationalism when confronted with profound human need.

V. Comparative Analysis

1. Nature of Obsession

In *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's obsession with Catherine spans decades, evolving from childhood attachment into lifelong vengeance. His fixation is rooted in unmet libidinal needs—when Catherine chooses social status over their bond, Heathcliff retaliates by destroying her loved ones and usurping her family home, only to continue cycles of longing even after her death (Islam 2014). This obsession is enduring and structural, driven by the id's demands and repeatedly replayed across generations. In contrast, Jed Parry's fixation in *Enduring Love* is sudden and acutely delusional. Triggered by shared trauma, Parry projects salvific meaning onto Joe, interpreting their chance balloon accident as a metaphysical sign. His obsession unfolds over weeks rather than years, characterized by intrusive behaviors—letters, stakeouts, quasi-religious rituals—that reflect a psychotic intensity rather than calculated revenge (McCarthy 2025; Shiva 2024). Heathcliff's is a strategic, albeit pathological, quest for permanence; Parry's is an impulsive, clinical syndrome of limerence.

2. Attachment Patterns

Both novels depict insecure or ambivalent attachment as the soil from which

obsession blooms. Heathcliff's orphanhood and erratic care under the Earnshaws foster a disorganized style: he oscillates between clinging to Catherine and lashing out at any perceived rival (Johnson 2015). Cathy's own upbringing—torn between the wild moors and the genteel Linton household—produces ambivalence that manifests in her vacillation between Heathcliff's passion and Edgar's safety. In *Enduring Love*, Joe's adult attachments appear secure until Jed catalyzes latent anxieties. Anna's responsive caregiving during Joe's panic attacks exemplifies a secure attachment figure that helps stabilize his faltering ego (Gupta 2024). Yet Joe's momentary regression under stress underscores how even ostensibly secure adults can revert to insecure dynamics when confronted with abandonment threats. Both texts thus illustrate how early attachments—and their failures—shape the capacity for healthy intimacy versus obsessive bond formation.

4. Gendered Expressions of Love

The novels also reveal how gender norms mediate expressions of obsessive attachment. In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine wields agency within strict Victorian constraints: her choice to marry Edgar is as much about social mobility as personal desire. Yet upon realizing her betrayal of Heathcliff, she punishes herself through

emotional self-harm, embodying the "angel in the house" torn between duty and desire (Stenstrand 2006). Her conflicted agency underscores how patriarchal structures channel female passion into self-destructive forms. By contrast, Anna in *Enduring Love* occupies a supportive yet vulnerable role: she listens, reassures, and provides emotional scaffolding, but lacks narrative power to counter Jed's intrusion directly (Gupta 2024). Her femininity is coded through empathy and care rather than defiance, leaving Joe to navigate obsession with Anna as his only refuge. In both texts, women bear the emotional labor of balancing societal norms and the fallout of male obsession.

5. Trauma & Memory

Trauma's imprint on memory sustains obsessive bonds in both novels. Brontë's nonlinear chronology—Nelly's flashbacks and Heathcliff's haunted return to familiar haunts—mirrors the compulsive re-enactment of early wounds (Ghazi 2005). Heathcliff's repeated retracing of moorland paths and endless monologues to Catherine's portrait enact a refusal to relinquish traumatic attachment. In *Enduring Love*, Joe's recurring nightmares and psychosomatic paralysis following the balloon accident signal how a single traumatic event can fracture temporal continuity (Gupta 2024). Jed's nightly

vigils and liturgical replays of their shared crisis function as ritualized memory work, forcing Joe into an unending present of anxiety. Thus, in both works, trauma reconfigures memory into a looping narrative that underpins obsession, arresting characters in a liminal space between past and present.

6. Cultural & Historical Context

Finally, the socio-historical milieus shape how obsessive love is dramatized. *Wuthering Heights* unfolds against 19th-century moorland norms: rigid class hierarchies, gender expectations, and religious moralism circumscribe personal desire. Heathcliff's outsider status as a foundling intensifies his obsession, since social barriers deny him legitimate access to Catherine, channelling his passion into vengeance (Islam 2014). By contrast, *Enduring Love* inhabits a late-20th-century secular, scientific milieu. Joe's identity as a risk analyst and empiricist initially seems to inoculate him against emotional extremity; yet his crisis reveals the limits of rationality in containing existential dread (Teng 2019). Jed's pseudo-religious language stands out precisely because it clashes with the era's faith in science. In McEwan's world, obsession emerges not from social prohibition but from the void left by disenchantment—an echo of Brontë's

moral strictures, refracted through postmodern skepticism.

Through these comparative lenses, we see that while Heathcliff and Parry differ in duration and social context, both embody how unmet attachment needs, trauma, and cultural constraints conspire to transmute love into obsession. Whether traced across decades or compressed into weeks, obsessive bonds expose fundamental human vulnerabilities—vulnerabilities that transcend genre and era.

VI. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, drawing primarily on textual analysis to interrogate the psychological dimensions of love, obsession, and attachment in *Wuthering Heights* and *Enduring Love*. Three interlocking strategies guide the research: close reading informed by psychoanalytic and attachment frameworks, thematic coding of recurring motifs, and rigorous source triangulation.

1. Qualitative Textual Analysis

A close reading of each novel forms the foundation of interpretation. Passages depicting key moments—Heathcliff's vengeful monologues, Cathy's declaration "I am Heathcliff," Joe's rational explanations, and Jed's obsessive missives—are analyzed through the lenses of Freudian psychoanalysis (id, ego, superego) and

attachment theory (secure, insecure, disorganized styles). This dual theoretical framing ensures that both unconscious drives and relational dynamics are foregrounded in interpretation. Marginalia and analytic memos accompany the readings to capture emergent insights and intertextual parallels.

2. Thematic Coding

Building on the close reading, thematic coding organizes the data into coherent categories: obsession (repetition compulsion, limerence), attachment (early bonds, adult coping), and trauma (memory loops, coping breakdown). Each category is further subdivided—for example, “obsession” encompasses id-driven vengeance in *Wuthering Heights* and clinical limerence in *Enduring Love*. NVivo software (or manual indexing, if preferred) is used to tag relevant text segments across both novels, facilitating cross-textual comparison and ensuring that no significant motif is overlooked.

3. Source Triangulation

To bolster interpretive validity, findings from the textual analysis are cross-referenced with external sources: peer-reviewed articles, theses, and media reports on psychoanalytic readings, attachment studies, and obsession in literature. For instance, Freudian readings of Heathcliff (Islam 2014; Dzahini 2024) are juxtaposed with our own passage

analyses, while behavioral markers of limerence (Shiva 2024; LitCharts 2016) are mapped onto Jed’s actions. Discrepancies between primary-text interpretations and secondary-source claims are examined and, where necessary, reconciled through deeper textual scrutiny.

By integrating these methods—close reading, thematic coding, and triangulation—this study achieves a nuanced, credible analysis of how *Wuthering Heights* and *Enduring Love* dramatize the interplay of unconscious drives, early attachment, and pathological obsession.

VII. Discussion

Synthesis of Findings

Across *Wuthering Heights* and *Enduring Love*, obsessive love emerges from the interplay of unconscious drives and insecure attachments. In Brontë’s novel, Heathcliff’s id-driven vengeance coalesces with a disorganized attachment style born of orphanhood, producing a lifelong fixation on Cathy that oscillates between adoration and revenge (Islam 2014; Johnson 2015). Cathy’s own ambivalence—torn between primal desire and social constraint—reflects an ego perpetually besieged by id impulses and superego injunctions (Stenstrand 2006). In McEwan’s narrative, Jed Parry’s clinical limerence exemplifies a compulsive repetition compulsion: he reenacts the

balloon accident as a means of sustaining a fractured internal object, projecting unmet childhood needs onto Joe (McCarthy 2025; Ahmed 2022). Joe's panic-ridden coping, counterbalanced by Anna's secure caregiving, underscores how even ostensibly stable adult attachments can unravel under trauma (Gupta 2024). Thus, Freudian constructs (unconscious drives, repetition compulsion) and attachment insecurities (ambivalence, disorganization) jointly scaffold the pathological love depicted in both works.

Theoretical Implications

This analysis demonstrates the value of extending object relations theory into literary criticism: by treating characters' mental representations of self and other as "objects," we can trace how splitting, projection, and idealization fuel obsessive bonds (Ahmed 2022). Unlike a purely Freudian approach—which prioritizes intrapsychic conflict between id, ego, and superego—object relations foregrounds relational dynamics and internalized otherness, enriching interpretations of stalking, revenge, and unrequited devotion. However, neither Freudian nor object relations frameworks fully capture the motivational nuance that arises when unmet needs (as conceptualized by Maslow) motivate characters to pursue power, recognition, or self-actualization

through obsessive love (Dai 2023). An integrated model that weaves psychoanalytic, attachment, object relations, and humanistic perspectives offers a more comprehensive toolkit for analyzing how literature stages the spectrum from healthy intimacy to pathological fixation.

Practical Relevance

Insights gleaned from these literary case studies have implications for contemporary therapeutic practice. First, recognizing obsession as rooted in attachment trauma suggests the utility of attachment-based interventions—such as Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT)—to address maladaptive relational patterns mirrored in Heathcliff's and Jed's behaviors. Second, narrative therapy techniques can help clients externalize obsessive thoughts, much as we externalize characters' drives in literary analysis, enabling them to rewrite their "love stories" beyond compulsion and revenge. Third, clinical parallels to limerence (Shiva 2024) indicate that obsessive relational styles may benefit from treatment modalities used for obsessive-compulsive spectrum disorders, including cognitive-behavioral strategies to interrupt repetitive thinking. By bridging literary insights with psychotherapeutic strategies, therapists can deepen their understanding of how early attachments and unconscious drives

converge to shape relational pathology and guide clients toward more secure, reciprocal forms of love.

VIII. Conclusion

This comparative study has illuminated both striking parallels and key divergences in how *Wuthering Heights* and *Enduring Love* portray love's darker dimensions. In Brontë's novel, Heathcliff's relentless vengeance and Cathy's ambivalent loyalties arise from the fusion of id-driven impulses and early attachment trauma, leading to a lifelong cycle of obsession and revenge (Islam 2014; Johnson 2015). McEwan's text, by contrast, compresses similar dynamics into a matter of weeks: Jed Parry's delusional limerence and Joe's gradual unraveling demonstrate how projection, repetition compulsion, and insecure attachment can erupt abruptly in adulthood (McCarthy 2025; Shiva 2024). While both narratives reveal the destructive potential of unmet needs—whether enacted over decades or days—they diverge in cultural framing: Victorian moorland strictures vs. a late-20th-century scientific ethos.

By integrating Freudian psychoanalysis, attachment theory, and object relations—and complementing these with Maslow's hierarchy of needs—this paper advances a multifaceted model for literary-psychological analysis. Object relations enriches

Freudian intrapsychic approaches by centering the relational matrix of internalized "objects" (Ahmed 2022), while Maslow's framework adds a motivational dimension that neither theory alone fully captures (Dai 2023). This synthesis demonstrates that a layered theoretical toolkit yields deeper insights into characters' drives, relational patterns, and pathological fixations, offering a template for future interdisciplinary scholarship in literary psychology.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations. It relies primarily on psychoanalytic and humanistic lenses and feminist critiques could further unpack gendered power dynamics in obsessive attachment. Reader-response studies would illuminate how contemporary audiences empathize with—or recoil from—these characters' compulsions, revealing the evolving cultural reception of obsessive love. Future research might also apply this integrated framework to other genres (e.g., gothic cinema, contemporary drama) and periods, testing its robustness across diverse narrative forms. Such extensions would deepen our understanding of how literature continues to articulate the universal yet mutable interplay of love, attachment, and obsession.

IX. References :

1. Islam, Md. "The Shadow of Freudian Core Issues on 'Wuthering Heights'." Asian

Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics, vol. 5, no. 2, 2014, pp. 1–10.

ERIC.<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1128781.pdf>

2. Willy, Margaret. "A Psychoanalytical Reading of Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights." B.A. thesis, Uppsala University, 2011. DIVA Portal. <https://www.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:519140/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

3. Alnasser, Rawan. "Catherine Earnshaw's Trauma in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights: BPD and Conflicted Loyalties." ResearchGate, Jan. 2024. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383542136_Catherine_Earnshaw%27s_Trauma_in_Emily_Bronte%27s_Wuthering_Heights_BPD_and_Conflicted_Loyalties

4. Johnson, Sarah. "The Brontë Attachment Novels: An Examination of the Development of Parent–Child Relationships." M.A. thesis, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2015. OpenSIUC.<https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2901&context=theses>

5. Hadzic, Amela. "Obsessive Love in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights." IBU Repository, 2017. <https://omeka.ibu.edu.ba/items/show/2552>

6. Stenstrand, Kristin. "Id – Ego – Superego: An Analysis of Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights." B.A. thesis, Dalarna University, 2006. DU DIVA.

<https://du.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:518156/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

7. Brown, Enrique. "Love and Addiction in Wuthering Heights." Literature Compass, 1996. Gale Academic OneFile. <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA18290969&issn=00263451&it=r&linkaccess=abs&p=AONE&sid=googleScholar&sw=w&v=2.1>

8. Dai, Xiaoling. "Analysis of Character Types and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights." ResearchGate, Aug. 2023. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377422205_Analysis_of_Character_Types_and_Maslow%27s_Theory_on_Emily_Bronte%27s_Wuthering_Heights

9. Dzahini, Amanda. "Freudian Perspectives on Wuthering Heights and Jane Eyre." International Journal of English Literature, 2024. <https://academicjournals.org/journal/IJEL/article-full-textpdf/472AEFC63846>

10. Sari, Noor Laila, et al. "Heathcliff's Neurosis in Brontë's Wuthering Heights Novel." Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni dan Budaya, vol. 4, no. 1 (Jan. 2020): 38–48. Mulawarman University. <https://e-journal.s.unmul.ac.id/index.php/JBSSB/article/download/2650/2167>

11. Ghazi, Faiza. "Psychological Time in Wuthering Heights." International Fiction Review, 2005. <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/IFR/article/download/13450/14533/18158>

12. McCarthy, James. "McEwan's Enduring Love: A Psychoanalytical Investigation." ResearchGate, Mar. 2025. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360576072_McEwan%27s_Enduring_Love_A_Psychoanalytical_Investigation
13. Ahmed, Salma. "Object Relations Theory in Enduring Love." World Journal of English Language, 2022. <https://www.scribdupress.com/journal/index.php/wjel/article/download/21824/13639>
14. Gupta, Avni. "Psychological Conflicts and Responses in Ian McEwan's Enduring Love." Contemporary Literary Research International, vol. 5, no. 2 (2024). <https://literaryjournal.in/index.php/clri/article/view/527/869>
15. Burkeman, Oliver. "Fooled you | Ian McEwan." The Guardian, 15 Aug. 1999. <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1999/aug/16/features11.g24>
16. Zhang, Li. "Lack of Empathy in Varieties of Love in Enduring Love." Theory and Practice in Language Studies, vol. 9, no. 11, 2019. <https://tpls.academypublication.com/index.php/tpls/article/download/5617/4510/15566>
17. LitCharts. "Obsession Theme Analysis – Enduring Love." 2016. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/enduringlove/themes/obsession>
18. Shiva, Raj. "3 Red Flags of Unhealthy Romantic Obsession." Psychology Today, Apr. 2024. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/social-instincts/202404/3ways-to-protect-yourself-from-relationship-limerence>
19. National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences. "National Mental Health Survey of India, 2015–16." NIMHANS, Govt. of India, 2016. <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3bc88bb2c377261b0336312714b96fcfd/uploads/2025/04/202504301375578715.pdf>
20. Teng, Hong-Shu. "The Strange Case of the Appendix: Ian McEwan and the Pathology of Pseudoscience." Journal of Literature and Science, no. 12, 2019, pp. 38–58. <https://literatureandscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/TENG-Final.pdf>