

The Wife's Prolonged Projection in Marian Parker's *The Recoil of the Gun*

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ABSTRACT

This article underlines the wife's prolonged projection as her defense mechanism in Marian Parker's *The Recoil of the Gun*. Projection as one of defense mechanisms gives attributes of own negative feelings to another person. It is reflected in the utterances of the wife in Parker's story who keeps blaming the husband whom she has killed. Through qualitative method and explorative approach, this paper investigates that the wife's projection is prolonged before and after the husband's death. When he is alive, she thinks that the husband is watching her but he is the suspicious one. When he is dead, she keeps justifying herself that what she has done is for the sake of her children. She also keeps saying things about marriage and how she wants to avoid such hereditary for her girls of not being married. It is proven that something is hidden by the wife, but she keeps saying that she is innocent by putting the guilt to the dead man. In conclusion, Parker's short story shapes understandings that projection done by a character may not happen once since s/he may insist justifications of the negative attributes given to her deceased husband.

Keywords: Marian Parker, Projection, The Recoil of the Gun

INTRODUCTION

Prolonged projection becomes visible through consistent patterns in how the character speaks about others, interprets events, or assigns blame. As a defense mechanism, projection involves attributing one's own unacceptable feelings, fears, or impulses to someone else; when this projection occurs repeatedly and becomes the character's habitual way of interpreting reality.

Through Sigmund Freud's concept, character analysis is conducted by examining recurring patterns in the character's behavior and language. One of the clearest indicators is when the character consistently accuses others of

possessing traits, motives, or intentions that reflect their own unacknowledged feelings. This habit of attributing inner tension to external targets reveals the unconscious displacement at the core of projection.

Another prominent sign appears in the character's linguistic choices. Their speech is often accusatory, suspicious, or charged with unwarranted certainty, even when no clear evidence supports their claims. Such patterns of dialogue reveal a psychological strategy in which the character protects themselves from confronting uncomfortable emotions by assigning those emotions to others.

This reliance on projection also manifests in the character's inability to accept responsibility for their actions or emotional states. Instead of acknowledging their internal conflicts, they externalize distress and blame their environment or the people around them. Over time, this tendency erodes their interpersonal relationships, as consistent projection prevents genuine understanding or connection. Conflicts escalate because the character's defensive stance obstructs authentic interaction (Gultom et al., 2024).

In psychoanalytic literary criticism, a character who demonstrates these persistent patterns is understood as living within their defense mechanism. They are unable to integrate the unconscious conflicts that drive their behavior, resulting in a form of psychological entrapment (Grestyana, 2024). In such cases, prolonged projection functions not only as a psychological structure but also as a narrative force, shaping the character's development, relationships, and the progression of the story itself.

Flash fiction represents a distinctive genre within the realm of literary compositions, characterized predominantly by its remarkable conciseness and succinctness. The brevity inherent in this form of storytelling may suggest a superficial engagement with the narrative (Galef, 2016). It is indeed important to note that such shortness does not inherently restrict or diminish the profound and intricate layers of meaning that can be embedded within the narrative fabric of the story. An exemplary instance of captivating flash fiction can be found

in a piece authored by the esteemed writer Marian Parker, entitled *The Recoil of the Gun*, which was published in the year 1916 (Parker, 1916). It is also subsequently contributing to the rich tapestry of literary innovation during that period. The complete narrative of this thought-provoking work.

The narrative presented a text, such as Marian Parkers' can be characterized as fundamentally uncomplicated; it revolves around the figure of a wife who, in a moment of profound introspection, openly confesses to her role in the heinous act of murdering her own husband (Parker, 1916). She candidly acknowledges that she is indeed the perpetrator of the gunfire that resulted in his demise, yet she persistently endeavors to rationalize her actions through various justifications. In her own understanding, she elaborates on the notion that her decision to commit the act of killing was fundamentally rooted in a desire to safeguard the future of her daughter, thus framing her violent actions as a form of parental protection. Furthermore, she asserts that it is her husband who possesses an air of suspicion, thereby necessitating her drastic course of action to eliminate him (Parker, 1916). The complexities of her behavior provoke a fascinating inquiry; readers are invited to deliberate on whether her actions constitute a mere instance of cold-blooded murder or if they represent a convoluted manifestation of a defense mechanism, particularly in the context of psychological projection.

In short, projection is one of defense mechanism that avoids

unacceptable traits and then blames another person. This kind of mechanism can be said as continuation of denial (Cramer, 2015; Mcleod, 2024; Vinney, 2024). The one who does this mechanism at first denies an impulse and then put the fault to anyone else. The perpetrator recognizes that there is anxiety coming through, and then tries to evade that unpleasant situation by subconsciously putting it into someone else. The main objective of such projection is clear and even so unequivocal (Cramer, 2015; Mcleod, 2024; Vinney, 2024). It is consequently done to protect the ego from any uncomfortable personal traits from outside threats.

What the wife does in Parker's theory is matter of projection in the sense of defense mechanism. She admits the killing but she insists that she does that for the sake of noble reasons. She knows that she will be blamed; therefore, she needs to shape another alibi to avoid severe punishment for her in the following trial. Her situation, her daughters, and even her husband are the three intertwined aspects that shape her such projection (Cramer, 2015; Mcleod, 2024; Vinney, 2024). This article examines how the wife carries out self-defense mechanism as the one who is suspicious of her husband. This research aims to understand how a person carries out self-defense mechanism according to projection theory. The following analysis reveals that the wife, as the main character in the story, feels excessive suspicion towards her husband and worries about the future of her children in which such murder is triggered.

METHOD

By using qualitative methods, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the question in this paper. Written through description in explorative approach, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between Marian Parker's short stories entitled *The Recoil of the Gun* written in 1916 and idea of projection in the sense of psychoanalysis and cultural studies. Online and offline scripts are derived from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references lists. The research data comes from discourses of Parker's story and Sigmund Freud's concept of projection. Each of them is read then broken down into its every particular element. More elaborations related to deepened analysis are also provided in addition furthermore.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Murder, the Wife, and Her Alibis

Parker's story written in 1916 is an interesting story taken from merely a side of a character. The wife tells stories as if she is in a dialogue. She keeps telling about her alibis in the case of murdering her husband. The data of her lines in the story is listed below:

Data 1

It's a queer place to receive you in, but that isn't my fault. (Parker, 1916)

The strange place referred to by the wife is a prison where criminals live. However, she believes

that it is not her fault. The wife seemed to have no fault even though she had killed her husband. Furthermore, the wife later insists to always blame her husband for everything that has happened which made the wife commit this action.

Data 2

People won't understand that I did it from the highest motives. (Parker, 1916)

The wife felt that no one cared and did not want to understand why she committed murder against her husband. She is still firm in his stance that she is indeed totally innocent. Killing one's own husband is considered a natural thing and must be done before further suspicion piled up. Apart from that, the wife felt that she was the only one who had the aim of the action.

Data 3

Even when I was alone, he watched me. He was suspicious. (Parker, 1916)

The wife suspects her husband that he always watches her when she is alone. This feeling of suspicion always comes and makes the wife uncomfortable and always feels anxious. However, in another context, this incident could mean a hallucination experienced by the wife. These hallucinations arose because of suspicion towards her husband.

Data 4

Everything proved it. He was going insane. But no one else knew. (Parker, 1916)

With all the suspicious feelings she had, this assumption triggered the wife's thoughts that her husband had gone crazy, but no one knew it. Her feeling was so strong that her husband was really crazy and that idea has clouded her rational judgment. She then also linked the insanity of the husband to the fate of her children in the future.

Data 5

I had to think of the children, my little girls. No one would have married them. (Parker, 1916)

The wife is worried about her young children as she thinks that they have a crazy father. She was worried that one day no one would want to marry her girls. So, this could also be the main reason she took action to kill her husband. The killing is done accompanied by such future hope that all problems will be resolved after her husband dies.

Projection, Anxiety, and Defense Mechanism

Unconsciously projecting one's thoughts and feelings onto another is a common ego defense strategy known as projection. The existence of past demands hidden beneath the subconscious is the cause of this projection (Boldrini et al., 2020; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021; Fang, et al., 2020). In psychology, the projection mechanism is the process by which an individual assigns undesirable emotions, wants, or beliefs to other people as though they were their own. This projection may have an effect on two different areas. The first is the projection's maker, who might not recognize the issues or emotions that need to be addressed

and so never find a workable solution. The second is the one who is the object of projection, who could feel perplexed or uneasy as a result of being unjustly accused or given credit for emotions or motivations that they do not truly possess (Boldrini et al., 2020; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021; Fang, et al., 2020). Projection can impact social, professional, or personal relationships and frequently occurs during stressful or emotional disputes.

Projection, functioning as a psychological defense mechanism, transpires when an individual displaces their own emotions, aspirations, or undesirable characteristics onto other individuals. The motivation behind such projection is to evade the unease that arises from confronting unfavorable personal attributes (Ahyudi, et al., 2024; Anggraeni & Prastiwi, 2024; Gilmore, 2024). Additional dimensions include the avoidance of internal conflict, particularly in relation to the reluctance to acknowledge one's own vulnerabilities or yearnings. Furthermore, this mechanism serves to shield the ego, thereby acting as a safeguard for self-esteem, as individuals are spared the necessity of confronting traits that are incongruent with their self-perception. Moreover, it signifies a form of escapism, wherein individuals opt not to confront, accept, or manage adverse emotions, such as jealousy, anger, or fear (Ahyudi, et al., 2024; Anggraeni & Prastiwi, 2024; Gilmore, 2024). Consequently, projection is also aimed at sustaining psychological equilibrium, safeguarding oneself

against anxiety, and even deriving a sense of relief in relation to the emotions or issues at hand.

Moreover, projection is not solely an introspective phenomenon; rather, it pertains to its interrelations with others. This occurs due to the tendency to allocate blame to external parties while circumventing self-reflection (Holmes, 1978; Jaffe, 1968; Kroeber, 2023). In the realm of psychology, projection encompasses the attribution of one's own emotions, aspirations, or characteristics to another individual, collective, creature, or entity. Defense mechanisms, such as projection, manifest as unconscious responses to distressing emotions and internal discord. Individuals employ these defense mechanisms to safeguard themselves from anxiety and psychological discomfort, often without a comprehensive awareness of the underlying motivations for their actions (BetterHelp, 2024; PsychologyToday, 2021; Wong, 2023). It frequently serves as an indicator of an individual's self-perception. Those who engage in projection on others evade accountability for their deepest emotions and aspirations. By attributing an unsettling emotion or characteristic to another entity, individuals can sidestep the acknowledgment of that aspect of themselves, thereby preserving their self-esteem.

The realization of projection may be the result of a load from the past that has been hidden from conscious awareness. Bad memories are always there, even if people do not remember them entirely (Holmes, 1978; Jaffe, 1968; Kroeber, 2023). Old, negative feelings can

resurface as a result of words, deeds, expressions, characteristics, or behaviors that set off a subconscious memory-based reaction. Projecting conduct results from ensuing fear and other unwanted emotions, which enables the person to avoid confronting their feelings (Holmes, 1978; Jaffe, 1968; Kroeber, 2023).

Projections do, in fact, only have negative effects. The reason for this is that projection is intended to prevent issues. Regular forecasts could lead someone to sidestep actual problems rather than address them, which could ultimately make matters worse (BetterHelp, 2024; PsychologyToday, 2021; Wong, 2023). People may blame others and then refuse to accept responsibility, which could further strain relationships. Projectors would then be unable to learn how to deal directly with emotions or difficulties. As a result of projecting unpleasant emotions onto others in order to avoid feeling guilty or ashamed, there is an increase in long-term stress (BetterHelp, 2024; PsychologyToday, 2021; Wong, 2023). Even while it may lessen anxiety, those who project their sentiments avoid having to confront the reality that they come from within.

Conflicts between impulses or desires that go against one's moral principles or social standards can also be resolved through projection. They choose to perceive the urges or wants in others rather than admitting they have them themselves (Costa, 2017; Peterson, 2023; Sarkis, 2024). In actuality, doing so serves as a kind of barrier against having a negative self-image. This is because people feel better about themselves when

they shift the blame or apologize to others for their emotions or errors. In essence, projection is a strategy to maintain self-esteem and avoid confronting challenging emotional truths. However, this strategy can lead to misconceptions and harm interpersonal relationships if it is utilized excessively (Costa, 2017; Pasopati et al., 2024; Sarkis, 2024).

The Wife's Mental Projection to the Murder

It is distinct that the wife in Parker's story is reflection of her projection. It is because she keeps blaming her husband for the murder she has done to him. Through the theory of projection, the data above is analyzed furthermore. Data 1 explains that the wife always believed that everything that happened was not her fault, even though the murder that occurred to her husband was a crime that she committed. The way why the wife said about such queer place is because she speaks about something insignificant for her regarding that place of prison. That statement may mean other things, especially callousness (Costa, 2017; Kirana et al., 2024; Sarkis, 2024). Connecting to line that it is not her fault, it is indicated that the prison is a place for such blurred doing, even if it is a murder. Another meaning can be conveyed as the prison is queer or even opaque, but her reason is crystal clear. This is why she contrasts her situation with the queerness of the prison cell. That is also her reason to keep inflicting the fault to someone else.

Data 2 explains that the wife committed the murder of her husband based on noble goals, but

this was based on her own perspective. So, the wife thought that no one wanted to understand this. What she said about highest motives is her way to speak of noble reasons behind her doing. She does not kill her husband without any reason. It is done, and must be done, because her husband has done something wrong. She must keep her promise as a dignified human being who then justifies what she has been done (Costa, 2017; Peterson, 2023; Sarkis, 2024). She later keeps saying that the noble reason is actually her daughters whom she keeps to have better future.

Data 3 explains that the wife feels uncomfortable with her husband's suspicious behavior. This is explained in the theory of self-projection where people who do defense mechanism will always feel things that they think are strange and suspicious. Indeed, this kind of suspicion is the reason why she kills her own husband. It is actually interesting seeing that the killing is done because the husband is the suspect (Costa, 2017; Peterson, 2023; Sarkis, 2024). Now, the wife is the suspect of that killing and she keeps evading the accusation. Moreover, when the wife thinks that the husband was suspicious, it actually means either that the wife is also suspicious. In this case, being suspicious is actually regenerating since the suspicious one is later being watched by another one being suspicious either.

Data 4 explains that the wife believes her husband is crazy based on his own perspective. The wife trusted her own beliefs more than she thought her husband was truly crazy. In this context, it can also be

interpreted that the wife is in the wrong, but the wife makes her own arguments to exaggerate the problem (BetterHelp, 2024; PsychologyToday, 2021; Wong, 2023). In that line, the wife keeps showing that it is always okay to blame her husband. It is indeed because he is the insane one, not her. She assumes that she is merely the executor of an insane person, nothing else. Therefore, she is justified in doing that killing. She is also validated herself that she is the only one who knew that her husband is insane. It means that no one can understand what she feels beside her own self and she has good reason for doing that (BetterHelp, 2024; PsychologyToday, 2021; Wong, 2023).

Data 5 explains that the wife uses her children as an excuse to justify all her statements and thoughts. So, the children here can become victims of the mother's thoughts and perspective. The wife is always worried about her children's future which is considered bad. The wife believes that killing her husband will change better indicated future (BetterHelp, 2024; PsychologyToday, 2021; Wong, 2023). She keeps telling about the future of her girls. Indeed, she says that in order to give perception that her husband is the one that will hurt the children. She builds such understanding that she could be trusted because she does the killing for the sake of her children (Holmes, 1978; Jaffe, 1968; Kroeber, 2023). She may be strict but she is trustworthy. At least that is what she can tell about accusation of her own husband's murder.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive array of data presented above strongly emphasizes the notion that the wife harbors an elevated perception of herself, which leads her to believe that she occupies a superior position in relation to all other individuals around her. In her mind, she is the one who should be exempt from any form of blame or accountability for her actions and decisions. She perceives herself to be the very embodiment of truth and integrity, despite the fact that she has actively engaged in morally reprehensible behavior that contradicts this self-image. This situation serves as a deep and wide reflection of the way in which her psychological projection seeks to manifest and distort reality to align with her self-serving beliefs. The wife goes so far as to commit the heinous act of murdering her

husband, driven by her unfounded suspicions regarding his fidelity and intentions. Furthermore, she engages in a process of rationalization, wherein she contemplates the negative and detrimental future that she envisions for her children if she were to allow her husband to continue living. In doing so, she attempts to justify her violent actions as a means of protecting her offspring from a perceived threat. This complex interplay of psychological factors illustrates the depths of her denial and self-deception, as she chooses to believe that her drastic measures are ultimately in the best interest of her family. Ultimately, her actions reveal a troubling portrait of an individual grappling with deep-seated insecurities and delusions, showcasing the tragic consequences of her distorted worldview.

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