Volume 17 Issue 1
Originally issued as G1

Global Journal of human-social science: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 17 Issue 1 Version 1.0 Year 2017
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460x & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Psychoanalytic Theory used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract- Psychoanalysis is one of the modern theories that are used in English literature. It is a theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organization and the dynamics of personality that guides psychoanalysis. It is known that the closet connection between literature and psychoanalysis has always been deployed by the academic field of literary criticism or literary theory. Among the critical approaches to literature, the psychoanalysis has been one of the most controversial and for many readers the least appreciated. In spite of that it has been regarded one of the fascinating and rewarding approach in the application of interpretative analysis. This psychological interpretation has become one of the mechanisms to find out the hidden meaning of a literary text. It also helps to explore the innate conglomerate of the writer's personality as factors that contribute to his experience from birth to the period of writing a book. The goal of psychoanalysis was to show that behaviour which was caused by the interaction between unconscious and unco-nsciousness. The proposed work titled 'Psychoanalytic theory used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study' aims to explore where psychoanalysis has been used by the author's in his/her literary works in English literature.

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GJHSS-G Classification: FOR Code: 420101

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Psychoanalytic Theory used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study

Md. Mahroof Hossain

Abstract- Psychoanalysis is one of the modern theories that are used in English literature. It is a theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organization and the dynamics of personality that guides psychoanalysis. It is known that the closet connection between literature and psychoanalysis has always been deployed by the academic field of literary criticism or literary theory. Among the critical approaches to literature, the psychoanalysis has been one of the most controversial and for many readers the least appreciated. In spite of that it has been regarded one of the fascinating and rewarding approach in the application of interpretative analysis. This psychological interpretation has become one of the mechanisms to find out the hidden meaning of a literary text. It also helps to explore the innate conglomerate of the writer's personality as factors that contribute to his experience from birth to the period of writing a book. The goal of psychoanalysis was to show that behaviour which was caused by the interaction between unconscious and unco-nsciousness. The proposed work titled 'Psychoanalytic theory used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study' aims to explore where psychoanalysis has been used by the author's in his/her literary works in English literature. This article also discusses the different psychoanalytic theory which was born out of the self-analysis under taken by Sigmund Freud in 1897.

KeyWords: psychoanalysis, oedipus complex, consciousness, literature, unconsciousness, daydream.

I. Introduction

The early 20th century marking the begaining of modern psychology and with the pace of this psychology the psychological analysis of literary texts evolved. This method of critiquing used the concepts advocated by noted sociologists, including Carl Jung, Alfred Adler and Otto Rank and above all Sigmund Freud. It was first used or developed as a method of therapy for neuroses by Freud, but very soon expanded it to account for many expanded developments and practices in the history of civilizations including warfare, mythology, religion, literature and other arts.

In the process of explaining literature psychoanalysis has been used and in the process literature has been used as a source for psychoanalytic conceptions. We noticed that literary criticism has used psychoanalysis theory to interpret literature and literature has also attempted to exploit and use psychoanalysis for creative purposes. Psychological criticism deals with the work of literature primarily as an expression, in fictional form, of the state of mind and the structure of personality of individual author.

If we look at the history of psychology we will find that psychoanalysis started from the medical profession. Entering into psychology, it spread into other fields of study and finally permeated literary studies as one of the different approaches to literature. The idea of psychoanalysis revolves round the concept that peoples' actions are determined by their prestored ideas of the recurrent events.

According to Monte (1977), "Psychoanalytic theories assume the existence of unconscious internal states that motivate an individual's overt actions". (Beneath the Mask, 8) .The Psychoanalysis movement is therefore championed by Sigmund Freud (1859-1939).

A later student of Freudian psychology in the name of Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) re-directs his view to suit his own social milieu in the understanding of psychoanalysis. It is Jung who sees the basic human behaviours in myths and legends. A later development of psychoanalysis embraced Alfred Adler (1870-1937) who sees man as a social being. In the sense of Adler we are motivated by social needs, "we are self conscious and capable of improving ourselves and the world around us". (McConnell, 250)

Thus, we can begin to perceive that there is a mutual fascination between the field of 'Psychoanalysis and Literature' is the major 'mediator' between the two disciplines.

II. Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalytic therapy is the re-narratization of a person's life. It has given much importance on the significance between the unconscious and thought processes. They believed that an awareness of this is therapeutic and vital to a healthy mind. Psychoanalysis emphasized on motives, it focused on hidden or disguised motives which helps to clarify literature on two levels, the level of writing itself and the level of character action within the text. Psychoanalysis gives emphasis on the subject and tries to explain what are the relationship of meaning and identity are to the psychic and cultural forces. Psychoanalysis has a great importance in contemporary understandings of reading, meaning and the relation of literature to culture.

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Psychoanalysis has been seen as a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders 'by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the minds'. Psychoanalysis examines the articulation of our most private anxieties and meanings to culture and gives us a perspective on them as cultural formations.

We live in a post-Freudian age; we cannot escape the fact that we think about human life differently from the way people in the past thought about it. Psychoanalytic approaches to literature may not always be rich enough, may tend to be reductive, on the level of theory psychoanalysis is of great importance.

III. The Basis of Freudian Psychoanalysis

The modern theory that is used in literature has two accepted meanings. Firstly, it means a method of treating mentally disordered people. Secondly, it also goes to mean the theories on human mind and its various complexities.

Psychoanalytic theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud. Freud was originally a medical man who was engaged in the study and treatment of patients in his clinic. His long devotion to this sector makes him realize and he observed mental disease of his patients. Gradually he was more interested in the study of psychology and more particularly psychology of the unconscious mind.

Freud suggested that our mind has three distinct regions. On the basis of his first discoveries concern the psychology of psychoneurosis, dreams, jokes and what he called the psychopathology of everyday life, such as slips of the tongue, of the pens.

The second is a system of pre-conscious and a third a system of conscious. His ideas were first presented in 'The interpretation of Dreams (1900). It has often been assumed that the evidential basis for these theories came from his study of dreams. It is the mind in which all our pleasant and unpleasant experiences are accumulated, synthesized and organized. (Das, Ritamain, pp.13-18)

IV. Theoretical Discussion

There are different theories relating to psychoanalysis. The main theories that are related to psychoanalysis are Freudian theory, Lacanian theory and object related theory.

a) Freudian Theory

Psychoanalysis is a psychological theory developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Austrian Neurologist Sigmund Freud and others.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory, coming as it at the turn of the century, provided a radically new approach to the analysis and treatment of 'abnormal' adult behavior. Earlier views tended to ignore behavior and look for a physiological explanation of 'abnormality'. The novelty of Freud's approach was in recognizing that neurotic behavior is not random or meaningless but goal-directed.

i. *The Pre-Oedipal Stage*

Freud claimed that all human beings are born with certain instincts, i.e with a natural tendency to satisfy their biologically determined needs for food, shelter and warmth. The satisfaction of these needs is both practical and a source of pleasure which Freud refers to as 'sexual'. Freud divides this stage into three stages: the oral stage, the anal stage and the phallic stage.

ii. *The Oedipus complex*

Sigmund Freud introduced the term 'Oedipus complex' in his 'Interpretation of Dreams' (1899). According to him, the concept is a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex, which produces a sense of competition with the parent of the same sex and a crucial stage in the normal developmental process (Freud, 1913). The term Oedipus complex was indeed named after the name of Greek mythical figure. Oedipus who was the son of king Liaus and queen Jocasta of Thebes, and finally killed his father and married his mother unconsciously which according to the belief of the writer and people of that time, was designed by fate. (Safra,1768).

But, according to Sigmund Freud, the accidents or incidents in the life of Oedipus happened because of sexual complexity between Oedipus and his mother. And on the basis of this story he invented the concept Oedipus complex which he attributed to children of about the age of three to five. He views that all human behaviour are motivated by sex or by the instincts, which in his opinion are the neurological representations of physical needs. He firstly referred to those as the life instincts which perpetuate the life of the individual, initially by motivating him or her to seek food and water and secondly by motivating him or her to have sex. (Boeree, 2006)

Freud's clinical experience led him to view sex as much more important in the dynamics of the psyche than other needs.

iii. *The unconscious*

The unconscious is that part of the mind that lies outside the somewhat vague and porous boundaries of consciousness and is constructed in part by the repression of that which is too painful to remain in consciousness. Freud distinguishes repression from sublimation –the rechanneling of drives that cannot be given an acceptable outlet. The unconsciousness also contains what Freud calls Laws of transformation. These are the principles that govern the process of repression and sublimation. In general we can say that the unconscious serves the theoretical function of making the relation between childhood experience and adult behavior intelligible.

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iv. *Ego, Id and Super-Ego*

Freud proposed three structures of the psyche or personality. Id, Ego, Ego and Super-Ego. Id refers a selfish, primitive, childish pleasure –oriented part of the personality with no ability to delay gratification. Super-Ego refers internalized societal and parental standards of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour'. Ego refers the moderator between the Id and Super-Ego which seeks compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as our 'sense of time and place'.

v. *Problems*

Some of the problems raised in response to Education theory are:

Freud's hypotheses are neither verifiable nor falsifiable. It is not clear what would count as evidence sufficient to confirm or refute theoretical claims.

The theory is based on an inadequate conceptualization of the experience of woman.

The theory overemphasizes the role of sexuality in human psychological development and experience.

b) Lacanian Theory

French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has reinterpreted Freud is structuralist terms, bringing the theory into the second half of the Twentieth century. Like Freud, Lacan discusses the importance of the pre-Oedipal stage in the child's life when it makes no clear distinction between itself and the external world; when it harbors no definite sense of self and lives symbiotically with the mother's body. Lacan refers to this stage as the Imaginary.

i. *The Mirror stage*

Lacan characterizes the period when the child begins to draw rudimentary distinctions between self and other as the mirror stage. This is the period when the child's sense of self and the first steps in the acquisition of language emerge. The 'I' finds and image of itself reflected in a 'mirror'.

c) Object Relations Theory

Another adaptation of psychoanalytic theory known as 'object relations theory' starts from the assumption that the psychological life of the human beings is created in and through relations with other human beings. Thus, the object relations theorist distinguishes between the physical and psychological birth of the individual. While the physical birth is a process that occurs over a specific and easily observable period of time, the psychological birth is typically extended over the first three years of life and can occur only in and through social relations. During this time, certain 'innate potentials and character traits' are allowed to develop in the presence of 'good object relations'. The quality of these relations affects the quality of one's linguistic and motor skills. The first years of life are characterized by the establishment of a close relationship to the primary caretaker and the subsequent dissolution of that relationship through separation and individuation. This psychological development of the child is a part of reciprocal process of adjustment between child and caretaker- both must learn to be responsive to the needs and interests of the other.

There are two important aspects of child development: self-identity and gender identity. In context of the nuclear family, the child must move away from the mother in order to achieve autonomy, the father offers an alternative with which to identify. Thus, the boy tends to develop strong self-identity but weak gender identity.

V. Literature and Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is not simply a branch of medicine or psychology; it helps understand philosophy, culture, religion and first and foremost literature.

In developing his theory of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud has often related it to art in general and to literature in particular.

In 'The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud analyzed Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Shakespeare's Hamlet for their Oedipal elements and for the effects the plays had on their audience. In his 'Creative writers and Day-dreaming,' Freud further expanded the connection between literature and psychoanalysis. He compared fantasy, play, dreams and the work of art in order to understand creativity. In 'creative writers and Day-dreaming' Freud first presented his theory on the structure of the literary work and made a psychoanalytic inquiry into the nature of literature. For Freud, a literary work is analogous to a daydream. Like a daydream, the literary work contains in its fantasy the fulfillment of an unsatisfied wish and thus improves on an unsatisfactory reality.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism can focus on one or more of the following:

I. The author: The theory is used to analyze the author and his/her life and the literary work.
II. The characters: This theory is used to analyze one or more of the characters, the psychological theory becomes a tool that to explain the characters' behaviour and motivations.
III. The audience: The theory is used to explain the appeal of the work for those who read it.
IV. The text: The theory is used to analyze the role of language and symbolism in the work.

The authors and writers are influenced by the psychoanalytic concepts which are reflected in the characters of their works and also in their mind. The psychoanalytic concepts which were propounded by Sigmund Freud influenced the psychoanalysis of authors are:

I. The primacy of the Unconscious.
II. The Iceberg theory of the psyche.

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III. Dreams are an expression of our conscious.
IV. Infantile behaviour is essentially sexual and
V. The relationship between neurosis and creativity.

Thus, we will observe some of the works of different author's where they have used psychoanalytic theories in their works.

VI. A Psychological Analysis of D.H Lawrence Sons and Lovers

Paris (1974) has mentioned in his book, 'A Psychological Approach to Fiction' that,

"Psychology helps us to talk about what the novelist knows, but fiction helps us to know what the psychologist is talking about…… The chief impulse of realistic fiction, however, is neither formal nor thematic but mimetic, and novels of psychological realism call by their very nature for psychological analysis. (Preamble).

We can say that fiction is an imitation of life, in other words we can say that it is the critical study of the mind of the author.

The novel Sons and Lovers is considered as David Herbert Lawrence's magnum opus. It is considered as an autobiographical fiction. Different interpreters of this novel have said different things about the source.

According to Anthony Beal in D.H Lawrence,

Sons and Lovers the autobiographical novel that tells so much about the first twenty-five years of his life, about his family and friend and society in which he grew up."

The novel is all about the protagonist Paul Morel who shown unusually much love from his mother and hatred for his father. There is conflict between love and hatred about the family members. Paul has given critics reason for believing that the novel deals with Sigmund Freud's one of the psychological theory that is Oedipus complex.

"A mother that lives in an unsatisfactory relationship both emotionally and sexual, with her husband, will easily be inclined to have a closer bond with her child." (Monster , p.105).

The Oedipus complex was introduced by Sigmund Freud which is named after the Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex by Sophocles.

According to Encyclopedia Britannia,

"[The] Oedipus complex, in psychoanalytic theory, [is] a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex, a crucial stage in the normal development process." [Encyclopedia Britannica].

According to Leif Mousten, there are six requirements that must be fulfilled for the complex to take place. The six requirements are:

I. An intimate relationship between mother and child prior to the complex.
II. The child has discovered the differences between mother boys and girls.
III. The sexuality of the child is now focused on the pleasurable sensation.
IV. The intellectual development of the child is now at an advanced stage, giving the child an opportunity to understand what is going on between two adults.
V. The emotional development of the child is now at an advanced stage, making the child more aware to sympathy and empathy meaning, a depiction between whom they like and who they do not.
VI. The emotional and intellectual development is now at an advanced stage, that the child no longer acquires the outside world by the use of imitation but instead with identification. (Mousten, p.95-97)
VII. On the basis of the criteria mention above for the Oedipus complex we can come to a conclusion that D.H Lawrence in his Sons and Lovers novel has followed Sigmund Freud psychological theory of Oedipus complex.

Sons and Lovers novel is divided into two parts. In the first the author gives a vivid illustration of family life of the Morels, their working class condition, childhood growth, games and problems and festivities, the little amount of money they make and the debts they owe. The theme of conflict between Paul's parents is constructively portrayed. The second part of the novel gives us the picture of the struggle soul of Paul, the complex relationship between Paul and Miriam, a girl that lives in a small farm with her family near the Morels.

Later in the novel, it gives a picture of intimacy between Miriam and Paul, but it is short-lived because Paul will not marry her. This physically intimacy shows the features of Paul as he continues to remain emotionally detached from Miriam. Once again, Paul succumbs to the oedipal attachment for his mother. Paul has a relationship with a married woman named Clara Dawes. Paul allows himself to have this relationship because he knows that practically this relationship can never go anywhere. She would never divorce her husband. Therefore, Clara is not a threat to Paul's oedipal fixation to his mother. There is no danger of her taking his mother's place.

Paul's mother becomes ill. Since she is bedridden and in pain. Paul gives her morphine. However, he administers an overdose of morphine to her, which leads to her death. While this might be seen as euthanasia, it seems likely that killing his mother was Paul's unconscious way of releasing himself from the Oedipus complex once and for all.

However, the dominant theme in Lawrence's Sons and Lovers is the Oedipus complex. The complex centers on Lawrence's Protagonist Paul and his mother's dealings or relation.

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VIII. Psychological Analysis of Albert Camus 'The Stanger'

The stranger is a novel written by Albert Camus. It focuses on the life of a French Algerian named Meursault after he is informed of his mother's death via telegram. Meursault story is an example of that opposition between man and the external universe that Camus terms the 'absurd'. The story is told from the first person perspective of Meursault as he makes his way through life.

Meursault is a very different individual. Through his actions, one can believe that he must have some sort of anti-social personality disorder, since he has no empathy. The reflection of this characteristics view is found in multiple instances of the story. The first instance is when he attends his mother's wake and funeral. He seems very disconnected from the situation. We find him doing things, not for his own gain necessarily, but to at least please others because he doesn't really care.

Overall, we found it safe to say that Meursault, while he has his faults and weaknesses, is not necessarily psychologically disturbed and more of misunderstood in his society.

The character Meursault also lacks enthusiasm and interest. He is primarily passive, because he has no ambitions. He lacks what the psychologist calls achievement motivations. Meursault in this novel doesn't want to commit himself into any relationship.

Camus decides that human being always looks for happiness although they are conscious of the ultimate defeat of death. It is from his life in Algeria in the 1939's that Camus drew the background for The Stranger. Camus was influenced by the circumstances where poverty, petty violence and racial tension of daily life prevail. He was part of the younger generation that rejected the conventions of middle-class society.

Meursault was a character who was honest, being true to his impressions, refusing to say more than what he know. He lives by his own principle and which has nothing to do with the behaviour that society expects.

Albert Camus has tried to portray the psychological mind of the character Meursault in his novel the stranger. Meursault knows that the only happiness lies in accepting the present. His life recalls that of Christ, not as a God or savior, but as a man whose example of living by his beliefs could inspire others. The stranger has often been considered one of the best novels written in French during the twentieth century.

IX. Psychoanalytic Study of Arthur Miller Plays

Arthur Miller's works can be analyzed with the involvement of the psychological variables and psychoanalysis of his characters in his plays. The psychodynamics of the soul, its conflicts which are intrapersonal and interpersonal in nature and the subsequent attempt to search for a new identity to deal with it to achieve the emancipation of the soul can be elucidated and a new insight into Arthur Miller's works can be given.

Arthur Miller's works when studied with the intervention of the psychological variables and psychodynamics of his characters in his plays brings out the different ways and means used the characters using the defense mechanisms as propounded by Freud to deal with their conflicts and achieve emancipations of their souls.

One of the themes of the American dream, the ability to become prosperous, shows the traditional spirit of Americans in Miller's 'Death of a salesman' and earlier in 'All my sons'. Willy Loman in 'Death of a Salesman' could not follow the change of time and became obsessed with the old values of success dream in the past and Joe a realist, in 'All my Sons', got along rather well, even though he too is influenced by old values to some extent.

Death of a Salesman is a play that is psychoanalytic because of the problems Willie faces with himself and his dysfunctional family.

Loman is an example of a person who is affected by repression of his pleasure principle and Arthur Miller wants to use Loman as an example for America since his hard working in salesmanship has drastically aided in his psychological regression. America's identity is based on the ideas of the American dreams to which Willie has always pitched the idea to his son, which is a dream of self-improvement mainly through economic means or repressing self-gratification in a quest for something larger.

The scene in Willie's daydream at Frank's chop house where Biff meets with Willie at the hotel shows the sign of the 'pleasure principal' problem that Willie has. He is having an affair with another woman which would break the sanctity in Willie and Linda's marriage.

Freud would agree that the psychoanalysis behind this is that Willie seeks pleasure and that he wants to get away from his problems at home. He does not like to face problems head on and rather decides that he will get away from all that and avoid the problems he has in his life.

Willie affects his other son Happy. Happy's affairs with women and his views on them somehow can come from the Oedipal Complex. Since happy did not have a strong influence on his father, he could have had a stronger influence towards his mother.

The American Dream has destroyed Willie psychologically and now that Biff did not respect him, he feels that his family would be better off without him. Willie uses 'regression' which is a defense mechanism that means when thoughts are temporarily pushed back

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out of consciousness and into unconsciousness. His daydreams are a good example of that.

These aspects in Death of a Salesman proves why this can be a psychoanalytic play. There is a combination of how the mind thinks that way that are caused by family problems and there are also hints of the Oedipus complex that are integrated in this play. Arthur Miller's principal characters are motivated by an obsession to justify themselves. They fix their identities through radical acts of ego-assertion.

X. Psychoanalytic Study of Walt Whitman's 'The Sleepers'

'The Sleepers' is one of the poems from the 1855 first edition of 'Leaves of Grass'. This is a simple poem, dedicated to exploring an idea of democratic empathy. 'The Sleepers' has long been counted among the more obscure poems of 'Leaves of Grass'.

Richard Maurice Bucke, a friend and discipline of Whitman, described 'The Sleepers' as a poem that represents the 'mind' during 'sleep'. He went on to say that the mind is made up to connected, half-connected and disconnected thoughts and feelings as they occur in dreams. Literary critics began to view the poem as a prolepsis examination of a model of the mind developed by Freud and Jung, who had put forth theories related to submerged psychic levels that were inaccessible to the 'conscious mind'. The conscious mind is divided into the 'id' or 'libido' or 'collective unconscious's' that played a great role in the shaping of an individual's personality. This aspect showed that Whitman had anticipated the modernist literary and artistic movements that were founded on the new psychological models. Miller, Jr.(1957) read the poem 'The Sleepers' as a 'psychological dramatization' of a flow of images with only eccentric relationships one to another, closely resembling the stream of consciousness technique of a later era.' (P.130).

Psychological critics like Miller and Black (1968, 1970) described the poem 'The Sleepers' as 'an evocation of psychic depths'. In Freudian terms 'The Sleepers' is the sexual maturation of a young boy as he grows into manhood. It is a poem of consciousness which revealed the poetic identity in its purely private context. The poem went through an implied cyclical process: implied innocence or oneness, psychic fragmentation, incompleteness, despair and then a unifying process in the last section.

XI. Conclusion

In view of the above study, we came to understand that psychoanalysis is a powerful tool in the critical analysis of a literary text. Its influence on the literary production is to add 'legitimacy' to the text. This paper highlighted the application of Freudian concepts to the explication of literary texts' thereby equating the text with the 'psyche', perhaps of the writer and providing us with a profound insight into the unconscious of the writer.

Finally, this paper has attempted to establish the relationship between psychology and literature and then proved that 'Literature' uses 'Psychoanalysis' for creative purposes which, in turn, enriches the quality value and legitimacy of the literary text. Literature can help us alter our cognitions, the internal structures of the self and this transformation can be well explained through psychoanalytic criticism, in turn, this enables us to explore new possibilities for reading, studying and teaching literature.

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