

# Margaret Atwood: A Contemporary Canadian Writer and Novelist –A Study

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## **Abstract:**

Psychoanalysis is one of the modern theories that are often examined in English literature. It is a theory regarded as a theory of personality organization and the study of personality that guides to the analysis of psychoanalysis. It has a close connection between literature and psychoanalysis. It has always been studied 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. It has been regarded one of the fascinating and rewarding approaches in the application of interpretative analysis. The psychological interpretation has become one of the techniques to find out the hidden meaning of a literary text. It also helps us to explore the innate literary qualities of the writer's personality as factors that contribute to her experience from birth leading to the period of writing a book. The goal of psychoanalysis was to show that behavior which was caused by the interaction between conscious and unconscious mind. This analysis of Margaret Atwood: A Contemporary Canadian writer and novelist - A study aims to reveal the personality of Margaret Atwood as a famous writer and novelist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Application:**

This study helps the students to learn more about English literature and the development of personality organization and the dynamics of personality in a unique way.

## **Methodology:**

This method of study and the psychoanalytic criticism, and the related analysis is examined in simple, clear and lucid style.

## **Keywords:**

Psychoanalysis, Oedipus complex, consciousness, literature, unconsciousness, daydream.

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Date of Submission: 15-01-2023

Date of acceptance: 31-01-2023

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## **I. Introduction:**

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century mark the beginning of modern psychology and the pace of the literary development in comparison with the critics and their texts. This method of criticism is used and 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 which 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 used the 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.

## **Margaret Atwood**

Margaret Atwood was born on November 18, 1939 in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. She was educated at university of Toronto (B.A.) and Radcliffe College (M.A.). She has written Historical fiction, Speculative fiction, Climate fiction and dystopian fiction in English. She was a poet, novelist, literary critic, essayist, teacher, environmental activist and inventor. She has published 18 books of poetry, 18 novels 18 books of non-fiction, nine collections of short fiction, 8 children's book two graphic novels and a number of small press editions of both poetry and fiction. She has won numerous awards and honours for her writing including booker prizes, the National book Critics and PEN Canter USA Lifetime Achievement Awards, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, the Governor Generals Awards and Princess of Asturias Award. A number of her works have been

adapted for film and television many of her poems are inspired by myths and fairy tales which was interested her from a very early age.

### **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 health mind. Psychoanalysis emphasized on motives, it focused on hidden or disguised motives which helps to clarify literature on two levels, the levels of writing itself and the level of character action within the text. Psychoanalysis gives emphasis on the subjects 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 understanding of reading, meaning and the relation of literature to culture. We live in post-Freudian age. We could not escape the fact that we think about human life differently from the way people in the past thought about it. Psychoanalytic approaches to literature might not always be rich enough, might tend to be reductive, on the level of theory psychoanalysis is of great importance.

### **II. Literature and Psychoanalysis:**

Psychoanalysis is not simply a branch of medicine or psychology; it also helps to 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 element 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, plays, dreams and the work of the art in order to understand '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 unsatisfactory reality.

Psychoanalytic literary criticism could 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 tool that to explains the characters' behavior 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.
- III. Dreams are an expression of our conscious.
- IV. Infantile behavior is essentially Sexual and
- V. The relationship between neurosis and creativity.

### **Psychoanalytic Theme in Margaret Atwood's Major Novels:**

Margaret Atwood's major novels are *Survival* (1972), *Surfacing* (1979), *Cat's Eye* (1989), *The Robber Bride* (1994), *Alias Grace* (1996) and *Oryx and Cake* (2003). For all her major novels she has studied the themes of psychoanalysis related to poverty, repressed childhood trauma, sexual abuses, misplaced feelings, unspoiled drives, anger, hatred and distress with deep insight and vision. Atwood's works encompass a variety of themes including gender and identity, religion and myth, the power and language, climate change, and "power politics".

The emotional implications, the unstable narrative voice uncanny encounter with various characters, submerged memories of the past, and the memory symbols of certain traumatic experiences were examined by Margaret Atwood with reference to Sigmund Freud and his profound theory of psychoanalysis with great care and precision and it would reveal Margaret Atwood as a distinguished writer and novelist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **III. Conclusion**

In view of this 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 study has highlighted the application of Freudian concepts to the explication of literary texts. Literature could help us to alter our knowledge, thought and experience, the internal structures of the self and this transformation could be well explained through psychoanalytic criticism and this enables us to explore new possibilities for reading, studying and teaching literature and literary texts.

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