

A Psychoanalytic Theory: Arthur Miller's Plays: Death Of A Salesman, All My Sons And Walt Whitman's Poem: The Sleepers – 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 his experience from birth and 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. The proposed study reveals the myth and archetypes of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* and Walt Whitman's poem *The Sleepers* in a remarkable way.

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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I. Introduction:

The early 20th 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.

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 Study of Arthur Miller's Play: Death of a salesman and All my Sons

Arthur Miller's works could be analysed with the involvement of the psychological variables and psychoanalysis of his character in his play. 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 could be elucidated and new insight into Arthur Miller's works could be given.

Arthur Miller's works when studied with the intervention of the psychological variables and psychodynamics of his characters in his play brings out the different ways and means used the characters using the using the techniques as propounded by Freud to deal with their conflicts and achieve emancipation of their soul.

One of the themes of the American dream, the ability to become prosperous, shows the traditional spirit of American 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 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 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 that Willie seeks pleasure and that he wants to get away from his problem at home. He does not like to face problems head on rather decides that he would 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 could 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 he defines techniques that means when thoughts are temporarily pushed back out of consciousness and into unconsciousness mind. His daydreams are a good example of life. These aspects in *Death of a Salesman* proves why this could 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.

Psychoanalytic study of Walt Whitman's Poem the Sleepers

'The Sleeper' is one of the poems from the 1855 first edition of 'Leaves of Grass'. This is a simple poem, dedicated to explore 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 disciple 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' the 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.

III. Conclusion

In view of this study, Arthur Miller's plays *Death of a Salesman*, *All my Sons* and *Walt Whitman The Sleeper* 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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