

## PSYCHOANALYSIS AS THE SCOPE OF LITERARY THEORY

*Summary:* The research and development of some theoretical aspects in modern fiction produce the psychoanalysis as the interpretative component of literary theory, which relates to some existential problems, through the analytical treatment of human mind and inner nature to the experimental method of judging literature. Actually, it is the didacticism created as the reader identifies with the narrator's reflection. This element lets the reader identify with the narrator's return to his past, as characters in Anglo-American or Irish literature are continually looking to their pasts to rationalize their presents. Every moment of the present exists solely because of what was. A man and his mind are covered by the mantle of experimental interpretative form as the completely new model of Universe which attempts to produce a deeper analytical explanation using the details from psychoanalytical theories. In the true spirit and original Platonic concept of art, some modern experimental literary contents and forms focus on developing the reader himself via this reflective narration. This inter subjective phenomenon between reader and narrator's reflection is the key to modern literary theory. Most of the literary theory could be considered a form of 'secondary revision' of the literary text. In its obsessive pursuit of 'harmony', 'coherence', 'deep structure' or 'essential meaning', such theory fills in the text's gaps and smoothes over its contradictions, domesticating its disparate aspects, and defusing its conflicts.

*Key words:* psychoanalysis, literary theory, experimentation, stream of consciousness technique

The phenomenon of psychoanalysis in literary theory has been observed through the modern psychological theories of Jacques Lacan, Delueze and Guattari, Sigmund Freud, Pjotr Demianovich Ouspensky, and also through the poetic principles of Gerard Genette, Boris Ouspensky, E.M.Forster, Virginia Woolf, Henry James etc. The major representatives of experimentation put the stress on the internal monologue, on the stream of chaotic thoughts and the correlation of dreams and reality, articulating all the elements together as the psychoanalytical phenomenon. Such aspect of interpretation could be treated just as a kind of potential for psychoanalysis; actually this could not be the real one, but just a segment of it.

Psychoanalytical literary criticism can be divided into four categories, depending on what it takes as its object of attention. It can attend to the *author*

of the work; to the work's *contents*; to its *formal construction*; or to the *reader*. In fact, psychoanalytical criticism can do more than searching for 'phallic' symbols; it can tell us something about how literary texts are formed, and reveal something of the meaning of that formation.

Most of the literary theory could be considered a form of 'secondary revision' of the literary text. In its obsessive pursuit of 'harmony', 'coherence', 'deep structure' or 'essential meaning', such theory fills in the text's gaps and smoothes over its contradictions, domesticating its disparate aspects, and defusing its conflicts.

The research and development of some theoretical aspects in modern fiction produce the psychoanalysis as the interpretative component of literary theory, which relates to some existential problems through the analytical treatment of human mind and inner nature to the experimental method of judging literature. Much of literary theory tends to view the literary work as an 'expression' or 'reflection' of reality; it re-enacts human experience, or embodies an author's intention, or its structures reproduce the structures of human mind. Essentially, it is the didacticism created as the reader identifies with the narrator's reflection. This element lets the reader identify with the narrator's return to his past, as characters in Anglo-American or Irish literature are continually looking to their pasts to rationalize their presents. Every moment of the present exists solely because of what was. A man and his mind are covered by the mantle of experimental interpretative form as the completely new model of Universe which attempts to produce a deeper analytical explanation using the details from psychoanalytical theories. In the true spirit and original Platonic concept of art, some modern experimental literary contents and forms focus on developing the reader himself via this reflective narration. This inter-subjective phenomenon between a reader and narrator's reflection is the key to modern literary theory. There is a demand made to the reader whilst reading modern literature that the reader must identify with the novel's characters' reflections themselves- how the character is reminiscing back to his past to explain his present. This is the reflection that we must focus on whilst reading modern literature. The thinking process of the character is what makes the reader identify and potentially, justify or rectify his own life. There is a form of transference occurring between a reader and character's reflection. Some modern writers make a demand on the reader to participate and this must be compared to some other writers' way of developing and narrating a story, which lets the reader identify with the characters and inner stories, rather than demanding the transference. The writing of those other writers is more assertive, more affirmed, and in a less demanding manner, presents *the story, not the character's reflection*, to the reader. So in modern literature, in order for the character to continue with his life, he must first understand his past.<sup>1</sup>

The nexus between the past and the character in order to rectify the present as the part of psychoanalytical procedure is what could be classified as the

<sup>1</sup> A classic example of this would be how Stephen Dedalus can only become an artist once he has understood his stunted past).

"Process of Being." Psychoanalysis offers a systematic accounting of the psychic instruments (especially the unconscious) and a theory of the mind and human psychic development. Sigmund Freud initially theorized a relation between the ego and the unconscious on one side as he contrasted the encompassed consciousness and the individual's contact with the external world on the other. In this model, the ego and the unconscious occupied different areas and the problem was to understand how human energy moved back and forth between the two. This process could be understood as the antecedent of the stream of consciousness interpretation. As for dreams, Freud argues the thoughts have two kinds of content, the "manifest" and the "latent". The manifest level is the thought itself, the object of interpretation. The latent level is the actual thought that cannot be known or expressed consciously because it has been repressed, or "censored" as he said. The mixture of conscious and partly unconscious chaotic thoughts produces the stream of consciousness. The basic elements of Freudian psychoanalysis still seem to be the segments of quite mystique and complicated experiment in modern literature, the stream of consciousness technique. The dreams are important because they hold the key to neurotic symptoms that usually originate in an individual's earliest experiences of instinctual repression and satisfaction. For this reason, childhood sexual experiences are fundamentally important. In normal sexual development, particularly during the 'dissolution' of the Oedipus complex which could be expressed differently, the narcissistic pursuit of pleasure associated with early sexual development "comes under the sway of the reproductive function" and the instincts are "organized towards a sexual aim attached to some extraneous sexual object." (Freud 1953-74, 7:197) These forms of primary and secondary narcissism shape the analytical approach of Oedipus complex. Having the different levels of Oedipus complex in life and in literature we ought to recognize the most impressive forms of Oedipus complex expressions. A 'normal dissolution' of the Oedipus complex would involve the child repudiating his mother, as a caregiver, with whom he was closely identified and to whom he was most attracted, and identifying with his father. This is the oftenest form of Oedipus complex. One more drastic form could be expressed by sexual attraction. Freud's understanding of object choice dynamics led to the central event in psychoanalysis. He defined the Oedipus complex expression as "one of the most painful, psychical achievements of the pubertal period... detachment from parental authority." (Freud 1953-74, 7:227) The importance of the Oedipus complex in psychoanalysis is hard to underestimate. "It is the basis of the family romances in which the young phantasy-builder replaces his family with one of the high rank or rescues his mother from an abusive father." (Freud 9:240) It guarantees the structural integrity of the nuclear family which, in a cultural context, could be regarded as the foundation of civilization.

Freud suggests that "the beginnings of religion, morals, society and the art converge in the Oedipus complex." (Freud 13:156) In transference, passionate (libidinal) investments in a repressed object are transferred to the analyst himself,

who is then in a position to draw out, through association, the latent wish or desire that is at the root of the original neurosis. These dream or thought images lead the analyst unconsciously toward an analytical expression of the stream of consciousness as the most complex consequence of the psychoanalytical treatment reflected on the literary form and context. Freud formulated a "structural theory of the mind", one in which the ego<sup>2</sup>, the super-ego<sup>3</sup>, and the id<sup>4</sup> signified certain kinds of relationships between conscious and unconscious elements of the ego. The main product of these relationships is the stream of consciousness, actually it is the expression of the stream of conscious and unconscious thoughts together. According to this structural model, significant portions of the ego are unknown and they are expressed by two primary instincts: sexual, linked to fantasy and the pleasure principle; and ego, linked to consciousness and the reality principle. The aim of psychoanalysis is restricted to "demonstrating the connection along the path of instinctual activity between a person's external experiences and his reactions"; which produces again the stream of consciousness as an instinctual or unconscious process.

Psychoanalysis experienced factional movements that reduced Freud's interpretation and made psychoanalysis more varied, more popular and more accessible. Carl Jung's break with Freud was to their different views on sexuality and the unconscious. But the more serious threat to Freud's theory came from, the so called, ego psychologists and object relations theorists. Ego psychologists tend to focus on the qualities of the ego, rather than on the id and the unconscious, while object relation theorists prefer the Oedipus complex and emphasize instead the mother-child relationship.

Jacques Lacan was critical of some of these developments, especially ego psychology. For this reason he returned to Freud and encouraged Freudian concepts like the Oedipus complex and the unconscious. Lacan's revolutionary thinking of the "subject" and the construction of the "subjectivity" began with his theory of the "mirror stage" of childhood development. Via the "mirror stage" (to which a person will come back in a moment) the child enters the *symbolic*: it enters the world of language in which the *real* world which we can never know is symbolized and represented by way of language and other representational systems that operate like language. We can never know the "real" because it can never be fully represented- it is beyond language. This entrance into the "symbolic" necessitates an acceptance of the language and of the social and cultural systems that prevail in the child's environment. In the "mirror stage" the individuals are confronted with the mirror (symbolic) image that the world gives back to us. The image, just like the image that we see in an actual mirror, is a distortion that leads to a "misrecognition." This "misrecognition" is the basis for what we see as our

<sup>2</sup> The superficial conscious part of the psyche, developed in response to environment.

<sup>3</sup> A largely unconscious element of the personality, acting principally as conscience and critic.

<sup>4</sup> The part of the psyche that is impelled towards fulfilling instinctual needs: the reservoir of libido.

identity. For Lacan, we need the response and recognition of others and of the *other* to arrive at what we experience as our identity. Our "subjectivity" is made in interaction with others, the individuals who resemble us in one way or another but who are also completely different. So, we become subjects by way of the perspectives and views of others. This "other" is not a concrete individual, although it may be embodied in one (father or mother, for instance), but stands for larger social order what we call "reality." We become subjects through a literal subjection to the existing order. Since our identity is constituted in interaction with what is outside of us and reflects us, it is "relational character"- a notion that introduces the idea of difference into the process of identity construction. For Lacan, there is a direct connection between the repressive character of language and culture and the coming into being of the unconscious, what Freud put into formation of the unconscious in terms of the nuclear family. Trying to uncover the fantasy of scientific objectivity, Lacan named the texts without some psychological elements, which make the characters and their lives more realistic, the non-artistic texts. The connection between the world and the individual is expressed like the mirror and named the "imago."<sup>5</sup> "Imago" of the external world or somebody's appearance there is in the hallucinations or dreams. It always supports the individual's inner condition and its objective projection making the subject-object relation totally unbreakable. For Lacan, the obscure and ironical facts are organized in the text by the unusual language, the allusions or the details from personal psychology of the characters or the authors. Lacan wrote the analytical theory as it is the poetry, using the philosophic idea and the symbolic logic at the same time.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari insist on the Oedipus complex in the work of Franc Kafka. According to them, The Oedipus complex is not a psychological problem but the impact of political external world. "But above all else' because collective or national consciousness is often inactive in external life and always in the process of break-down, literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective....It is the literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility." (Deleuze, Guattari 2001:1599) When they think about the experimental art of fiction, Deleuze and Guattari make the comparison between Kafka on one side and Joyce and Beckett on another. Their theoretical attitude relates to the language as the minor fact in the psychoanalysis. "Since the language is arid, make it vibrate with a new intensity. Oppose a purely intensive usage of language to all symbolic or even significant or simply signifying usage of it. Arrive at a perfect and unformed expression, a materially intense expression. For these two possible paths, couldn't we find the same alternatives, under other conditions in Joyce and Beckett? As Irishmen, both

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<sup>5</sup> The term used in psychology with meaning likeness, statue (Latin)

of them live within the general conditions of a minor literature. That is the glory of this sort of literature to be the revolutionary force for all literature." (Deleuze, Guattari 2001:1601) According to them, in the works of Joyce and Beckett, the greatest innovation is the experimental writing technique. Wanting to explain the subjective-objective relation and the temporal-spatial perspective, Deleuze and Guattari mention the "method of mutilated text" (of Joyce and Burroughs), Nietzsche's mixture of "the eternal return toward the present" and "the present as the non-known in thought". (Deleuze, Guattari 2001:1604)

The different components of modern psychological theories go behind deep into the literature. The literary critics, theoreticians and the authors themselves become very interested in these components but nevertheless the psychoanalysts are the most precise and even the most complete in defining them. The strong silken thread of psychoanalysis in modern fiction appears and constantly stays the experimental, mystical phenomenon which confronted the relation between the science and art with a lot of enigmatic problems of psychoanalysis applied in literature.

Lacan himself is not much interested in the social relevance of his theories, and he certainly does not solve the problem of the relation between society and the unconscious. Freudianism as a whole does enable us to pose this question; and I want to examine it in terms of a concrete literary example, D.H. Lawrence's novel *Sons and Lovers*. This novel is a profoundly Oedipal novel, because even conservative critics suspect such phrase as the 'Oedipus complex'. The young Paul Morel who sleeps in the same bed as his mother, treats her with the tenderness of a lover and feels strong animosity towards his father, grows up to be the man Morel, unable to sustain a fulfilling relationship with a woman, and in the end achieving possible release from this condition by killing his mother in an ambiguous act of love, revenge and self-liberation. Mrs. Morel is jealous of Paul's relationship with Miriam, behaving like a rival mistress. Paul rejected Miriam for his mother, but in this rejecting he is also unconsciously rejecting his mother in Miriam, in what he feels to be Miriam's spiritual possessiveness. The potentially tragic tension in which Paul finds himself trapped, and almost destroyed, springs from the fact that his mother - the very source of the energy which pushes him ambitiously beyond home and pit - is at the same time the powerful emotion force which draws him back. A psychoanalytical reading of the novel need not be an alternative to a social interpretation of it. We can discuss Paul's 'weak' image of his father and 'strong' image of his mother in both Oedipal and class terms. We can see how the human relationship between an absent, violent father, an ambitious, emotionally demanding mother and a sensitive child are understandable both in terms of unconscious processes and in terms of social forces and relations. In reading *Sons and Lovers* from already mentioned aspects of the novel, we are constructing what may be called a 'sub-text' for the work - a text which runs within it, visible at certain symptomatic points of ambiguity or overemphasis, and which we as readers are able to write even if the novel itself does not. All literary works

contain one or more such sub-texts, and there is a sense in which they may be spoken of as the 'unconscious' of the work itself.

Freud's account of the dream, by contrasts, enables us to see the work of literature not as a reflection but as a form of production. Like the dream, the work takes the materials like language, other literary texts, and ways of perceiving the world and transforms them by certain techniques into a product. The techniques are various devices we know as 'literary form'. In working on its materials, the literary text will tend to submit them to its own form of, already mentioned, secondary revision: it is a 'revolutionary' text like *Finnegans Wake*, it will try to organize them into a reasonably coherent whole, even if, as with *Sons and Lovers*, it will not be always successful.

We'll mention two very different American critics indebted to Freud: Kenneth Burke, who blends Freud and linguistics to produce his own suggestive view of the literary work as a form of symbolic action, and Harold Bloom who rewrites literary history in terms of the Oedipus complex. But Roland Barthes's "naturalized" sign is equivalent to Lacan's "imaginary", so in both cases an alienated personal identity is confirmed by the inevitable world.

The aspects of it are evident in the writings of Virginia Woolf, whose fluid style offers a resistance to the kind of male metaphysical world, symbolized by the philosopher Mr Ramsey in *To the Lighthouse*. Ramsey's world works by abstract truths, sharp divisions and fixed essences: it is a patriarchal world with the symbol of sure, self-identical truth and is not to be challenged. Woolf's concern for personal relationships (in Bloomsbury group of writers) invites psychoanalytic readings of a novel partly turned to the Oedipus complex. The story opens with James, The Ramsey's youngest child, at his mother's feet, both of them posing for Lily. Mr. Ramsey storms about the house and yard declaiming that there will be no trip to the lighthouse, a journey James very much wants to take. The weather will be fine, his mother murmurs, but his father contradicts her, "it won't be fine". The bond with the mother is looked upon jealously by the powerful father who symbolically withholds the Phallus/lighthouse, the means by which James can win his mother's heart but also the sign of his ascension to the symbolic order. This threat of alienation should initiate the normative process of development. The male child, James, learns to identify with the father and to transfer his desire to a more appropriate love object. Ten years later we discover the outcome of James's development. He has not resolved the Oedipal conflict clearly, that had surfaced so long before. "He had always kept this old symbol of taking a knife and striking his father to the heart". (Woolf 1989:184) The imagery is appropriate when we recall that the narrator refers to Mr. Ramsey's presence as an "arid scimitar".<sup>6</sup> His son appropriates this same image in order to do away with what it represents, the restless tearing apart of the world under the illusion of understanding its secrets. We can feel James's dissociation of his father as a "harpy" man in the words- "...an

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<sup>6</sup> Scimitar- a curved sword or saber used by Turks

old man, very sad, reading his book..." (Woolf 1989:184) But he associates with his mother, a most unharpy-like woman, even after her death. This is a Lacanian perspective of sense of masculine identity. The arrival at the lighthouse suggests that the tyrant has been dispatched, the mother is no longer an object of desire and the "phallus"<sup>7</sup> can now be handed on to James. All these presentations lead us towards the stream of consciousness. The reader may wonder about Cam's relation to her father, and to some degree we get a glimmer of it in the final paragraphs in which Lily Briscoe completes her portrait of Mrs. Ramsey and James from ten years before. Lily Brescoe deconstructs the novel's Oedipal dynamic, and transforms it into the possible sort of stream of consciousness. So, the moment James lands at the lighthouse, Lily says, "It is finished". A single line centers and balances her vision: "With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished....I have had my vision". (Woolf 1989: 209)

The simple and evident connection between psychoanalysis and literature could also be found in the works of Joseph Conrad and James Joyce. The theory which connects the stream of consciousness, the sub-text, psychoanalysis and the secondary revision is so called "reader-response theory". The reader must become a participant in the process of making meaning. Specifically, the reader must decode the fragment from the text that appears to come from nowhere. Therefore, in Irish literature, in order for the character to continue with his life, he must first understand his past. A classic example of this would be Stephen Daedalus. As *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* throw up more of these fragments, the reader realizes that they are streams of conscious thought, the report of Stephen's own thinking process. The "ideal reader" implied by the styles of *Ulysses* would know that this phrase refers to Joyce's *A Portrait as a Young Man*, at the conclusion of which Stephen's friend Cranly tries to convince him not to leave church to pursue his artistic vision. Joyce's text is able to explore the possibilities of specific language style. Another side of Joyce's experimental style is intertextuality, a complex web of relations with other texts and traditions that is neither referential nor influential.

Narrative theory alerts us to other possible motifs which could be added to a reading focused on Marlow's impressionistic storytelling. The quest motif can be regarded from the point of view of psychoanalysis. Marlow embarks on a metaphorical journey into the unconscious, both his own and his culture's. According to Freud, the unconscious contains traces of old human experience, the quality which attracts Marlow's notice about Congo: "Going up river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings." (Conrad 1988:35) Marlow's words give us a sense of a strange and timeless landscape. Marlow's experience, as he himself suggests, is like a dream, "That commingling of absurdity, surprise and

<sup>7</sup> Phallus- a figure of the penis as a symbol of male generative power, used in many systems of religion



bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams.” (Conrad 1988:30)

If the Congo Symbolizes the unconscious, the other elements (the river, the jungle, and the native inhabitants) symbolize, already mentioned Freudian repressed material ('latent content') that is transformed through “dream-work” into the 'manifest content'. There is a sense that the jungle is something what comes from Marlow, something he suspects he may have repressed; “I saw a face amongst the leaves on the level with my own, looking at me very fierce and steady...” (Conrad 1988: 46) Marlow represses his own humanity, his own 'otherness', perhaps, which is projected onto the African natives as part of non-human nature. He thinks he understands his glimpse into the conscious. He sees the process which he represses; it is his own humanity which is reflected through the wild and passionate creature. So, his reflection Kurtz, who might stand in for the *id*, the force of unconscious instinct, can be seen as a part of his personality that he cannot comfort openly. Going through various symbolic exclusions, Marlow's experience looks like a dream whose truth is impossible to share without misinterpretation.

The aim of this research was to explain the “process of being” or the section of psychoanalytical attitude through the medium of modern literature. I hoped to reach a point of understanding that this “process of being” is in fact a catharsis for the modern world. I hoped to be able to argue that the identification with the character's reflection brings the reader a sense of solace, of collective belonging in an age of intense individualism. In brief, the answer that lies within us all, can be found, if desired, by understanding the other's (in this case the narrators') search for his own answer.

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Мирјана Лончар-Вујновић

## ПСИХОАНАЛИЗА КАО ДЕЛОКРУГ КЊИЖЕВНЕ ТЕОРИЈЕ

*Сажетак:* Истраживање и развој неких теоријских аспеката модерне прозе чине психоанализу интерпретативном компонентом књижевне теорије, која се односи на неке егзистенцијалне проблеме, кроз аналитичко третирање људског ума и унутрашње људске природе до експерименталног метода књижевне критике. Заправо, ово је креирани дидактизам, као што се читалац идентификује са рефлексijом приповедача. Овај елемент нагна читаоца да се идентификује са приповедачевим враћањем у прошлост, као што карактери у англоамеричкој или ирској књижевности непрестано завирују у своју прошлост да би рационално објаснили своју садашњост. Сваки тренутак садашњости егзистира

сам за себе искључиво због онога што је било. Човек и његова свест заоденути су плаштом експерименталне интерпретативне форме, као потпуно новим моделом Универзума, која настоји да створи дубље аналитичко објашњење користећи неке елементе из психоаналитичких теорија. У истинском духу и изворном платоновском концепту уметности, неке савремене експерименталне књижевне садржине и форме усресређене су на развој ликова рефлексивном нарацијом. Овај узајамни субјективни феномен између читаоца и нараторове рефлексije представља кључ модерне књижевне теорије.

*Кључне речи:* психоанализа, књижевна теорија, експериментисање, техника тока свести