

Applicability of Psychology in Diasporic Literary Realm

Dr. Arti Puri^{1,*}

¹Assistant Professor, Apex University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India.

*Corresponding author: artipurioal@gmail.com

Abstract: Psycho-analysis as a discipline is concerned with understanding the mind, its processes, and its perception of reality. When applied to literature, psycho-analysis helps critics understand how literature can function as a reflection of the subconscious, revealing truths about the human condition, fears, and desires that may not be immediately obvious on the surface.

Keywords: Psycho-analysis, Consciousness, Archetypal, Defense Mechanism

1. Introduction:

The application of psychology to literature is not a novel exercise. Psycho-analytic criticism is a very important tool because it allows the literary analyst to penetrate into the surface of text and layers of meaning that the author might not even be consciously aware of. In a nutshell, the term psychoanalytical literary criticism is about the author and his/her work and psycho-analysis is about the mind and its perception. Thus, in this type of criticism, we only talk about the minds associated with literary work. As ego psychology developed further, psycho-analysis acquired the complex theories of defense mechanisms employed with the help of ego psychology. One can not only trace the various defense mechanisms but also the different fantasies that lie within the text. The application of psycho-analysis may be traced back to the fourth Century B.C. Aristotle himself used this technique/approach in defining the catharsis effect in tragedy to arouse the feeling of fear and pity (Krishnaswamy et al., 2004).

2. The Scope of Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism:

Among various analytical and interpretive approaches to literature, psycho-analysis interpretation provides deep insight into the thematic concerns, and symbolic and creative aspects of a work (Mitra, 2005). We can find many psychological portraits in the works of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, etc. Among all these literary gems, Shakespeare stands out like a beacon of consciousness because of his ability to articulate the nuances of psychological experiences and conflicts.

In this way, the Psycho-analytical approach holds concepts, reasons behind actions and thoughts, explanations, etc. of different characters, places, descriptions, choice of words, and narrative structure in such a way that it opens further versatile types of approaches that will make a deep assessment about the author and his creative works. The psychic context of the literary work pays more attention than the social and historical context. Thus, it provides the individual psychic drama above anything else (Kundu, 2011).

3. Ernest Jones and the Foundations of Psychoanalytic Literary Theory:

Although many writers and authors employed this approach in their literary works but Ernest Jones was the first psycho analyst that provided full scale psycho analytic treatment of major literary works. Ernest Jones (1879–1958) was a British neurologist and psychoanalyst, one of the most influential figures in the development of psychoanalytic theory, particularly in its application to literature (Koppenfels, 2020). Due to his lifelong friendship with and work with Sigmund Freud, Jones is often considered the first theorist who systematically applied psychoanalytic concepts to interpret literature. He was the very first who pioneered the method of psychoanalytical thought as applied to literature, drawing directly on Freud's psychoanalytical notions (Shreyas et al., 2024). Further, Jones was instrumental in joining psychology and literary studies for allowing thereby some other critics to tackle how unconscious processes, repressed desires, or childhood experiences are suggested in literary works. He works on the assumption that no dramatic criticism of the characters in a play is possible under the pretense that they are real people, an assumption that is typical of the first phase, id – centered psycho-analytic reading known as the psychology of the unconscious (Ellmann, 2014).

Jones elaborates on Hamlet's mysterious procrastination as a result of the Oedipus complex. Hamlet continually postpones the act of revenge because of the complicated psycho-dynamic situation in which he finds himself trapped. Though he hates his uncle, he nevertheless unconsciously identifies with him –for having killed his father and married his mother. What is Hamlet's own unconscious wishes have been carried out by Claudius. In addition to this marrying to Hamlet's mother gives the uncle the unconscious status of being a father – destructive impulses towards him who provoke a great sense of anxiety and meet with repression.

4. Freud, Jung, and Divergent Psychoanalytic Perspectives:

Freud and Jung both had a profound impact on the analysis of literature, particularly the character analysis and various themes in such works as Oedipus Rex and Hamlet. Their perspectives on what literature is about-their approaches to understanding it along with human psychology were, however, quite different. In psychoanalytic theory, Freud considered literature to be a revelation of the unconscious, particularly of the repressed desires, wishes, and conflicts of the writer. Freud mentioned dream theory, addressing one of these issues in regard to how repressed thoughts become manifest in art, literature, and even everyday life. In contrast, Carl Jung, a former disciple of Freud, had a different approach to collective unconscious and archetypes. Jung believed that the unconscious was not only individual but also shared by all humanity, containing archetypes—universal, mythic images or symbols that resonate with people across different cultures and times that were coined by the term Collective unconscious. The literary characters of Virginia Wolf's work like Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay, etc. are inspired by the psychological theories of Carl Jung. Adler supported literature as an expression of social consciousness and personalized self that is reflected in the work of a writer.

5. Psycho-analysis and Diaspora Studies:

Psycho-analysis can provide the most valuable understanding of the emotional, psychological, and identity-related tribulations of individuals living in a diaspora. The psychoanalytic approach to diaspora considers how migration, displacement, and existence between cultures impact upon the psyche and how individuals then go about processing memories, identities, and relations to both their homeland and the host society.

By integrating psychoanalytic theory, literary criticism becomes a powerful lens through which to examine the complexities of human emotion, behavior, and creativity in literature. Some of the key psychoanalytic concepts that can be utilized for the evaluation of diaspora experience are:

5.1 Loss and Trauma:

Exile and Displacement: Many in the diaspora experience exile; for those who do, loss accompanies such experiences in regard to homeland, social networks, and familiar cultural context. The psychoanalyst would inquire what kind of losses such individuals suffer and their consequent impact on the self-perception of the individual, as well as on his relations with others. Loss does not entail merely the loss of physical territory but includes a cultural and familial context that grounds identity.

Trauma: In this case, if the migration is accompanied by conditions of conflict, violence, or persecution, there would stand to be such traumatic experiences that have lasting effects. For psychoanalysts, the focus would be on how such trauma is internalized, on how such unutterable trauma comes to manifest itself in furnished mental health symptoms, and on how one perceives that trauma transmigrates down the generations.

5.2 Identity and the model of the unconscious:

Cultural and National Identity: For individuals of that diaspora, who they become must primarily do with an inter-relationship set between their old homeland and that of the new country. Psycho-analysis underlines the unconscious processes that shape and inform identity. Diasporic experience might lead to conflict or confusion regarding belonging in the form of a complex hybridization of identity. This creates multiple layers of tension among distinct cultural self-identities which can be contemplated as a “split” or “fractured” sense of self.

Melancholia: Somehow along that path, it was as though some modicum of melancholia started emerging where either individuals or groups lament for a lost homeland or culture, and such notions prevented a full adaptation to the new environment. Consequently, the emotions of alienation, despair, or even symptoms of a depressive nature may arise.

It is true that most diasporic writers involve themselves in loss rather than gain. This loss is because of the creation of a new kind of culture resulting from crossing the boundaries. It is the uniqueness of Diaspora that came into existence after coming across the tension between the native and alien cultures, between the native language and the adopted language and between their own nation, history and that of the one with a new historical perspective. As Paranjape (2001) notes, “These diasporas displaced, alienated, exiled, excluded, and oppressed, create their own kind of epistemic disjunction at the heart of the metropolis”.

6. Conclusion:

Psychoanalytic criticism provides a rich framework for examining the deeper unconsciousness of literature and unveiling hidden desires, conflicts, and psychological situations. Using psychoanalytic theories anchored on Freud, Jung, and others, psychoanalytic critics reveal insights into the character, narrative, and psyche of the author. According to psycho-analysis, the displacement of the diaspora entails emotional and psychological struggles such as loss, trauma, hybrid identities, and melancholia, which arise out of tension between native and adopted cultures. This lens also serves to enrich literary investigation by emphasizing that literature is a projection of the human psyche, thereby assuring a nuanced understanding of identity, belonging, and human complexities.

References:

1. Kundu, A. K. (2011). *Eco-consciousness in the Works of Salman Rushdie*. Adi Publication, Jaipur. 190 p. ISBN: 9789380902555
2. Mitra, R. (2005). *Critical Responses to Literature in English*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist, New Delhi. 256 p. ISBN: 9788126905850
3. Paranjape, M. R. (2001). *In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts*. Indialog Publication, New Delhi. 351 p. ISBN: 9788187981053
4. Krishnaswamy, N., Varghese, J., & Mishra, S. (2004). *Contemporary Literary Theory: A Student's Companion*. Macmillan India Limited, New Delhi. 160 p. ISBN: 9789384872984
5. Koppenfels, M. V. (2020). From Flaubert to Ernest Jones and Ernst Simmel: Nightmares under Analysis. *Psycho-analysis and History*, 22, 159-174. <https://doi.org/10.3366/pah.2020.0335>
6. Shreyas, N., Deshpande, S. S., Jawdekar, A. M., Shah, P. P., & Khachane, N. A. (2024). Matters of the Mind: A Look into the Life of Sigmund Freud. *Cureus*, 16, 71562. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.71562>
7. Ellmann, M. (2014). *Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-582-08347-9 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315845074>