

Exploring the Depths of Trauma, Psychology, and Literature: Unveiling Hidden Realities in the Human Psyche and Literary Expression

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the intricate interplay between trauma, psychology, and literature, aiming to uncover the concealed dimensions of the human psyche and their reflection in literary works. Drawing inspiration from Adrienne Rich's concept of "Theory" as a tool for pattern recognition and Sigmund Freud's foundational contributions to trauma theory, this study investigates how trauma shapes individuals' internal landscapes and finds expression in the creative realm. Through an exploration of Freud's theories on dreams, Oedipus and Electra complexes, and the unconscious, the paper reveals the profound influence of psychoanalysis on the depiction of human nature by novelists, critics, and poets throughout the 20th century.

The paper proposes that the artistic process stems from the unconscious mind of the creator, manifesting as stories, dreams, and myths that undergo stylized transformation to convey symbolic expression. It contends that literature serves as a medium for cleansing and refining the soul and conscience, tapping into collective unconscious patterns that resonate with shared human experiences. This reciprocal relationship between psychology and literature is underscored, showcasing how psychological exploration can be akin to literary analysis and how literary psychoanalysis provides insight into the intricacies of the human psyche.

In conclusion, this research offers a comprehensive view of the intricate connections between trauma, psychology, and literature. It illuminates how psychological concepts have shaped literary narratives and how literature serves as a mirror reflecting the depths of the human mind. Through the lens of various literary and psychological theories, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how the exploration of trauma and psychology enriches the tapestry of literary expression.

Key Words: Psychology, Trauma, Literature, theories, literary expressions.

Modern trauma theory has been largely contributed by Sigmund Freud. The study of trauma is based on his studies on the nightmares of the veterans of First World War. In his earlier writings Freud has explained dreams as symbolic expressions of unconscious desires and instances where these wishes are fulfilled. However, this explanation is not applicable to the veteran dreams: they are by no means pleasant or symbolic. They are, rather, characterized by "literality", as they seem to take the soldiers back to the very site of the initial shock.

The Greek word "Trauma" means "wound" referring to an injury inflicted on a body. In its later usage, mainly in the medical and psychiatric text, and most in Freud's works, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. Freud tries to clarify trauma in psychoanalytical way and says, "Indeed, the term "traumatic" has no other sense than an economic one. We apply it to an experience which within a short period of time presents the mind with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way, and this must result in permanent disturbances of the manner in which the energy operates". (215)

Lenore Terr, a child psychiatrist who did the first waste study of traumatized children Writes Psychic, "trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind" (8). Historical trauma is very specific, and not everyone is subjected to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it. The theory of trauma became severely pivotal in post-World War II. Many trauma narratives were written simulating unutterably awful experiences. Though there is an Infinite loss during any genocide and dreadful experiences are sustained by its victims but limiting the trauma theory only to genocide or holocaust victims would be missing out the leading issues associated to the theory.

Freud's initial idea, in Studies in Hysteria, concerned the dynamics of trauma, repression, and symptom formation. Freud held that the traumatic events, objectionable to conscious level of mind can be forgotten and yet re-emerge in the form of psychopathologies like OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), anxiety disorder and somatoform disorder and etc. This initial theory of trauma and symptom turned problematical for Freud when he declared that neurotic symptoms were mainly the outcome of repressed drives and desires than of traumatic experiences. Freud returned to the theory of trauma in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, a work that emerged in his treatment of World War I warfare veterans who suffered from frequent nightmares with other symptoms of their war time hysteria. Here, the traumatic event and its aftermath again becomes focus point to psychoanalysis, but again Freud shifted his focus from the event to what he counts a more encyclopaedic frame, in this matter a biological urge towards equilibrium that he then

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theorized as the “Thanatos” (death drive). Conclusively, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud attempted a theory of trauma that would account for the historical development of existent cultures. Particularly worthwhile in this work is his explanation of the concept of “latency,” of how memory of traumatic experiences can be lost in lapse time but then regained in a symptomatic form when triggered by some similar experiences. It is not startling that theorists have turned to concepts of trauma as tools of literary and cultural inspection. But trauma is not simply synonymous with disaster.

Dominick LaCapra’s *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* has two connected purposes, “to get involved in and explain some of the current public conflicts related to disaster representation (for instance, the German “historians’ debate” and the de Man and Heidegger affairs); and to explain a theory of historical trauma along with its transmission”. LaCapra achieves both these goals admirably. His discussions over the particular dispute among the best available, and his contribution to a theory of trauma and its cultural transmission is extraordinarily crystal clear and insightful. LaCapra’s theory of trauma focuses on three psychoanalytic aspects: the return of the repressed stuff; acting out versus working through and the dynamics of transference. A traumatic historical event, LaCapra argues, tends first to be repressed and then to re-emerge in forms of compulsive behaviour

LaCapra defines two vital implications of his perception of historical trauma. First, trauma gives an approach for rethinking postmodern and poststructuralist theories in a clearer historical sense. As LaCapra suggests, “the postmodern and the post- Holocaust become mutually intertwined issues that are best addressed in relation to each other” (198). This connection would include a novel, traumatic comprehension of what he calls “the near fixation on the sublime or the almost obsessive preoccupation with loss, aporia, dispossession, and deferred meaning” (2). Secondly, LaCapra gives an original rethinking of the debates on the literary canon, mentioning that a canonical text should not help lastingly install an ideological arrangement but should, rather, “help one to foreground ideological problems and to work through them critically” (25). Each text would be, in effect, a site of trauma to which the reader would have to engage.

The book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, And History* by Caruth is full of sparkling insights. Its introduction, “The Wound and the Voice,” opens novel ground over a problematic explored by Geoffrey Hartman, Elaine Scarry, and Slavoj Žižek—the connection between anguish and language, in its narrative, historical, and ethical dimensions. Caruth states that trauma as it first occurs is incomprehensible. It is only later, after a period of latency, that it can be placed in a narrative: “the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located” (Caruth 7). Traumatic narrative, then, is solidly referential, but not in any direct or simple way. And the creation of a history emerges from this delayed response to trauma, which allows” history to arise where immediate understanding may not” (Caruth 18)

Two visible features of trauma which recent theorists agree upon are both outcomes of traumatic repression. First, the dissociation associated with trauma is at the heart of the involuntary return to traumatic memories. Secondly, because of the dissociation, a total comprehension of a traumatic experience mere comes belatedly to its participants. The war poets insistence upon portraying the pain involved in warfare can be comprehended in this light. Wilfred Owen’s Preface to his own poems mentions that, for him, recognition of what the war meant in terms of pain precedes any impulse towards grieving: “Yet these elegies are not to this generation, / this is in no sense consolatory” (55). The advantage Owen places on identification before consolation are vital, pointing to a significant feature of working in trauma. Trauma paralyzes the mourning process on two levels. First, its perturbations of memory intervene with the power to recognize the extent of one’s losses. The war poets constantly externalize these failures of memory as the failure of official cultural institutions, like, newspapers and War Office reports, to project the war in a realistic sense. The second form of interference is an unconscious reply to the first one: the unconscious compels upon recognition/identification of that which has been repressed. Therefore, as Owen’s Preface signals, trauma survivors reject efforts at consolation, especially when consolation seems to attenuate the extent of their pain. Many in fashion trauma theorists, including Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub and Robert Jay Lifton state that working through trauma needs a witness who can recognize the subject’s anguish. For Felman and Laub, it is only through the complicated exchange of witnessing that the survivor rebuilds his own narrative of the past. Susan Gubar, whose *Poetry after Auschwitz* is the widest study available on poetry written about the disaster, believed that the poetry can have a special relationship to testimonies of trauma. Gubar disagrees with those who strongly criticize any representation of the Jewish genocide and particularly the critics who think that lyric poetry is an unsuitable type of representation of the oppression of concentration camps. One reason for this is exactly the dialogic condition that, because of many figures of speech, is more characteristic of prose than of the poetry. Another reason is the nonlinear idea of large weighty books (tome) that is more characteristic of poetry than of the classical prose. Poetry, states Gubar, “abrogates narrative coherence and thereby marks discontinuity” (313).

Literature is an outcome of the mind, a strange by outcome of the human psychological makeup. There is a bilateral connection between these two. They have a reciprocate connection; the Psychology of the unconscious can be termed as literature and is a dune mining approach to its foreign view, very well-known about the literature and literary critics. The most clear and exact reference to the human mind is discovered in psychological novels that deal with the person’s psychological states like thoughts, feelings, emotions and introspections and etc. The game of psychology does not depend alone on the novel. It also emblazons the short and sharp ways of short story, it has the great ability to position the disturbed kiss curl of poetry and it is the psychological twist that catches our attention in the extraordinary and world-famous play, Hamlet. The psychological content can wear various mask sin literature. It can be depicted symbolically or in a metaphorical style. It can be also traced in the structure of the text, the place, the time and the action or even in meter and rhythm if it is about poetry.

Psychological novels entirely developed in the 20th century, supported by his discoveries in the area of psychoanalysis. Freud is famously known for his theories related to the unconscious mind and the mechanism of repression. The effect of Freud is transparent in all genres of all literatures of the twentieth century throughout the entire world. It is of course mentionable that a man who was primarily a psychiatrist and psychologist has influenced literature to such a great extent that Freud has nearly become synonymous to modernism in World literature. He argued that the mind can be divided into two parts: the conscious mind that includes everything the individual is aware about and the unconscious mind which includes individual's feelings, thoughts and memories that always influence his behaviour:

The oldest and best meaning of the word "unconscious" is the descriptive one; we call "unconscious" any mental process the existence of which we are obligated to assume__ because, for instance, we infer it in some way from its effects- but of which we are directly aware...if we want to be more accurate, we should modify the statement by saying that we call a process "unconscious" when we have to assume that it was active at a certain time, although at that time we knew nothing about it. (*The Anatomy of the Mental Personality*, 83)

Sigmund Freud points out the significance of the unconscious by saying that "most conscious processes are conscious for only a short period; quite soon they become

latent, though they can easily become conscious again" (*The Anatomy of the Mental Personality*)

Freud divides the human consciousness into three levels, the conscious, the unconscious and the preconscious and explained:

The unconscious system may therefore be compared to a large ante- room, in which various mental excitations are crowding upon one another, like individual human beings. Adjoining this is the second, smaller apartment, a sort of reception room, in which consciousness resides. But on the threshold between the two there stands a personage with the office of the door-keeper, who examines the various mental excitations, censors them, and denies them admittance to the reception-room when he disapproves of them... You will see at once that it does not make much difference whether the door-keeper turns any one impulse back on the threshold, or drives it out again once it has entered the reception-room; that is merely a matter of the degree of his vigilance and promptness in recognition. Now this metaphor may be employed to widen our terminology. The excitations in the unconscious, in the ante-chamber, are visible to consciousness, which is of course in the other room, so to begin with they remain unconscious. When they have pressed forward to the threshold and been turned back by the door-keeper, they are incapable of becoming conscious, we call them repressed, but even those excitations which are allowed over the threshold do not necessarily become conscious; they can only become so if they succeed in attracting the eye of the consciousness. This second chamber may be suitably called the preconscious system... Being repressed, when applied to a simple impulse, it means unable to pass out of the unconscious system. (63)

Another significant theory of Freud that has relevance to literary concepts is his interpretation of dreams. He stated that dream is only the expression of repressed stuff, sexual and otherwise, and is mere an effort at "surrogate wish a fulfilment" (Freud 251). When the unconscious desire is enough powerful but cannot be expressed because of "internalized prohibitions and repressions which demand the wish to take on a symbolic form if it is to be acknowledged at all" (Edwards 251). Explaining creativity as the expression of unfulfilled childhood desires, Freud observed:

occasion mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. From there it harks back to a memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled; and it now creates a situation relating to the feature which is a fulfilment of the wish. What it creates is a day-dream or fantasy, which carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus, the past, present, and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of wish that runs through them. (38-39)

All these theories have strongly influenced novelists, critics and the poets of twentieth century to a significantly in their view and portrayal of human nature. Especially, the stream of consciousness fiction is the straight beneficiary of Freud's theory of the unconscious level of mind. Virginia Woolf uses stream-of-consciousness to stress the psychological characteristics of her characters. She follows her characters thoughts as the story unwraps and outlines those events that haunt her characters' memories. Woolf uses a multiplicity of narrators to record what is going in her characters' minds. Here we are not supposed forget the Indian writer Anita Desai as mentioned by Purvi N. Upadhyay, "Anita Desai has contributed a lot in making Indian English Fiction popular the world over by shifting the domain of her fiction from outer to inner reality and by carrying of the flow of the mental experience of its characters" (47). The fictional cosmos of Anita Desai is situated in the corridors of the human consciousness. She is almost obsessively worried of the black uncannily overwhelming internal world of her powerfully introvert and wallflower characters. Her characters, particularly the females, have been portrayed on the borderline of psychological illness. With a belief to catch the prismatic standard of life in her fiction, she makes the use the stream of consciousness technique, flashbacks and interior monologues. These techniques/methods are perfectly used in capturing genuinely a psychological domain, a powerful impression, and a quickened multiplied consciousness. The midpoint of her fictional construction becomes some powerful consciousness gracefully realized. For this she has often been called the Virginia Woolf among the Indian fiction writers. Anita Desai centralizes her attention more on character rather than to the plot and portrays them by submerging deep inside their psyche and undressing their pain, anger, dissatisfaction frustration and insanity. Women are projected as arrested in the midst of their desire to assert their individuality on one side and their responsibility to live according to the traditional norms on the other side. Education and in fashion notions on equal rights give birth to the modernistic imbroglio of women in society. Coming down of the ivory tower of fancy and fantasy, they come face to face with the stupid and senseless facts of being and as a result they feel discouraged, disappointed, grief-stricken and broken-hearted. The time

her characters come out of the protective and comforting existence and turn towards the bitter and bleak realities of the life outside, they feel frustrated and helpless and the unkind, heartless thick-skinned, cruel and cold urban surroundings, in addition to the absence of affinity and comprehension on the part of their near and dear one's mere aid to improve their seclusion. Solitude makes them handcuffed, helpless, forlorn and indecisive personalities, who seek for love and are not able to get it. As R.K. Gupta has commented, "Desai's female characters are generally neurotic, highly sensitive but alienated in a world of dream and fantasy. Separated from their surroundings as an outcome of their failure or unwillingness to adjust with the reality" (184).

The Russian brain, Leo Tolstoy, explored human psychology. He felt the character's inner life, emotions and thoughts in his world famously brilliant write-up War and Peace. His protagonists are frequently coming across the inner combat, doubt, new insights and disappointments while fighting truth and justice. He openly comes out with the illogical reasons behind the human behaviour in War and Peace. He stresses that wisdom is not connected to the reason, but to an approval of people's mysterious actions. He filtered the explanation of the character's inner lives in his next work Anna Karenina. The nuances of hopelessness, love and dark emotions have been expressed in the inner monologues. Henry Bamford Parkes has outlined, "every writer grows up as a member of a particular society, and the structure of his personality, his view of life and his emotional conflicts and communications are conditioned by social factors. He is likely, moreover, to be generally receptive to those broad currents of thought and feeling which are shared by other members of the society". (380)

In this manner, the different modifications that take place in arts, culture, philosophy, history and religion leave their marks over the literature of their respective ages. True to this universal law of literature, novelists continually add to the richness of our human experience; they bring before us new topics, new characters, and new attitudes making efforts to represent human existence in its entirety.

The Tale of Genji has been written thousand years ago in Japan and is considered to be world's first psychological novel. In Europe, Boccaccio, was the first exponent of literary psychology. However, early psychological content in literary works is found in the texts of Plato and Aristotle. Samuel Richardson and Laurence Stern are the founding fathers of the psychological literature as a genre. They have two sue-generis psychological literary works, *Pamella* and *Tristram Shandy* respectively, to their credit.

With regard to the issues discovered, art comes from artist's unconscious state of mind. This functions as stories, dreams and myths, back out of an obsessive artist who is hidden in the unconscious such a symbolic expression are they are stylized and promote the cause. The words can be marvellous and fantastic for it stands for art, the mental filter, refinement of the soul and conscience to be cleansed. The discovery of the unconscious psychological controversies by the poets and writers of the past is manifested in their writings. Literary images that are in the collective unconscious fit our old patterns. The old patterns are common genetic tendencies humans in different states/ conditions/ situations of their shows. Poets and writer's mental status ranging from sadness and gladness of others, over all, and most of people are searching for the soul/primary/basic requirements. The literature is not something outside of psychology, and language can be said the way to talk about his mental mining and this way can be considered literary psychoanalysis. Psychology and literature have a reciprocate connection; the psychology of the unconscious can be termed as literature, and is a dune mining approach to its foreign view, very known to literature and literary critics. In Psychological Review in depth stories, and techniques for induction made ploy it is. This function works the same dream in the literature, and function of the dream and its features is in the form that is related/connected/affiliated to the literature.

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