

Literary Theory and Literary Criticism
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Lecture – 14

Part A

Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Criticism

Hello and welcome to the course on Literary Theory and Criticism. In today's class, we will be looking at Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism. This is going to be a two part lecture, in the first part of the lecture we will be looking at some key psychoanalytic concepts and the names are some sickly psychoanalytic theorists including Sigmund Freud and also his protege Carl Gustav Jung.

The second part of the lecture we will follow it up with a bit of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. The lecture will also be complemented by a psychoanalytic reading of some prominent literary texts. So, to begin with what is a psychoanalytic criticism, put simply it is a form of criticism which uses some of the techniques of a method known as psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature.

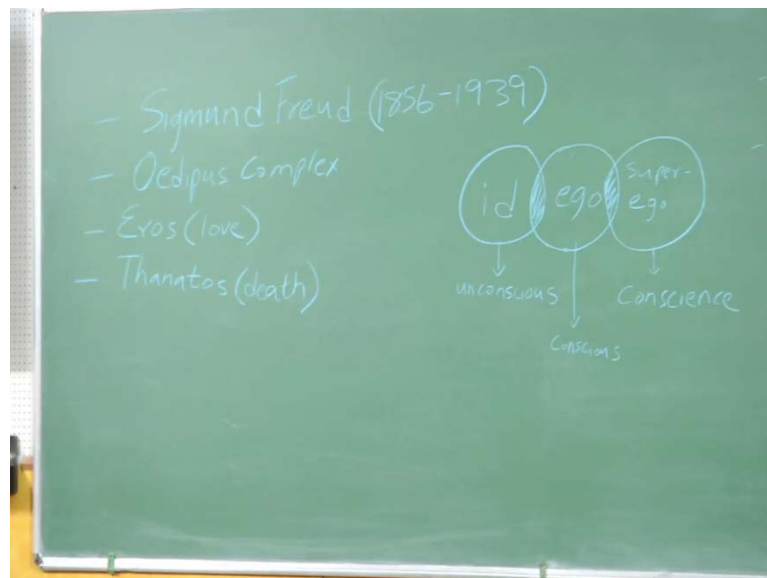
Psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy, which sought to aim, which sought to cure mental disorders by investigating the interaction between the conscious and the unconscious elements in one's mind. Now, the classic method with which, by which this is achieved was to get the patient to talk freely, in such a way that all his repressed feelings and emotions and desires and fears etcetera, which are understood to be causing the conflicting problems are forced to come into the patients on conscious mind and openly phased, rather than remaining deeply worried within his own unconscious.

To give you an example, the recent James Bond film Skyfall which was released in 2012, features the use of one such method. If you are aware of the film, you will recall that James Bond is seen to have gone through a very traumatic experience, he gets shot on the job and in order to enable him to come back to the job and start functioning as an agent again, he has to prove himself through a series of tests both physical as well as psychological.

Now, what are the methods in which Bond is assessed psychologically is through a process known as a free association. There is a classic psychoanalytic method in which the tester basically analyses the character by throwing random words at him, words that are intended to evoke a sort of emotional response. Now, from the film you will know, you will recall that even though Bond has apparently no issues in responding fast and accurately to some of the words that are thrown at him, words such as gun or car for instance. He has an immediate problem, when he is confronted with the word Skyfall. Now, that is because of Bond's own close association with the place called as Skyfall which is used to be his parental home. Now, clearly as we can see from this example, the hesitance that Bond encountered while trying to cope with a stimulus word Skyfall, it shows us that he had a clear problem in associating himself with this stimulus known as Skyfall.

Now, this process itself is based on specifically the practices of how the mind and the instincts and specifically and most importantly, how perhaps sexuality works. Now, these theories were developed by an Austrian psychologist and known as Dr Sigmund Freud.

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Now, these theories and methods were developed by an Austrian psychologist Dr Sigmund Freud who lived between 1856 and 1939. Now, there is a growing consensus among theoreticians and scholars today, that all therapeutic values of the methods

advocated by Dr Sigmund Freud might be somewhat limited and that Freud's own life work is perhaps seriously flawed by a lot of methodological irregularities.

At the same time we cannot deny the fact that Sigmund Freud remains a major cultural force and has made massive contributions to the way we think about ourselves. Now, all of Dr Freud's work depends upon the notion of the unconscious, which is like I mentioned earlier, the part of the mind that goes beyond the consciousness which nevertheless has a very strong influence on our day to day actions.

Many of Freud's own ideas concern aspects of sexuality and it is perhaps one of the reasons why Freudian psychology is kind of often made in controversy. Notorious among his theory is perhaps, this is theory is on infantile sexuality, which this is basically the notion that sexuality begins not at puberty or at physical sexual maturation, but even way before that, you know especially through the infants, the male infants relationship to his mother.

And connected with this idea is of course, the idea of ((Refer Time: 04:56)) the Oedipus complex, as you can see here written on the blackboard. Oedipus complex is basically a theory by Sigmund Freud which says that the male infant conceives a desire to eliminate the father and become the sexual partner of the mother. Many forms of intergenerational conflict are seen perhaps by Freudians as having a bearing, having oedipal overtones.

For example, professional rivalries between a generation of men and perhaps the preceding generation of man can be explained using this framework. Harold Bloom's book the anxiety of influence which was published in 1973 also sees the struggle for identity by each generation of poets has an Akmend of this very same Oedipus complex boys.

Now, as you can imagine the very idea of Oedipus complex would suggest perhaps that Freudian theory is often deeply masculinist and biased and that also one of the reasons why Freudian classic, Freudian theory was often attacked by feminist critics and thinkers. Another key Freudian idea is that the libido which is basically which can be understood as the energy drive associated with sexual desire.

Now, in classic Freudian theory it has three major stages of focus including the oral, the anal and the phallic. Now, these are inturn derived from the five psychosexual stages of

development that Freud had originally proposed. The libido in the individual is a part of a more generalized drive which Freud would later call Eros. ((Refer Time: 06:35)) As you can see from the blackboard, Eros is derived from the Greek word for love and which basically implies the life force and it is complemented by what we have here as Thanatos which is derived from the Greek word for death and basically implies the death instinct.

Depression is also a key Freudian terminology that you need to be familiar with when you understand psychoanalytic literary criticism. Depression implies the forgetting or the repression of or the ignoring of unresolved conflicts, unadmitted desires or traumatic past events. So, that they are in a way forced out of your conscious awareness into the realm of the unconscious. This is the psychological defense mechanism which is intended to guard the psyche unnecessary trauma.

The underlying assumption in psychoanalysis is that when some deep rooted wish, our fear or a memory or a desire is too difficult to face, we may try to cope with it by repressing it or eliminating it from our conscious into the unconscious. However, what needs to be acknowledged is that, this does not necessarily make this unwanted feeling go away. It still remains alive within the unconscious and constantly sees a way back into the conscious mind, always succeeding eventually.

At this point perhaps, I would like to draw your attention to a film Starring Christian Bale that is came out a few years ago known as the Machinist. Now, in the machinist we have the character of Christian Bale who is surprisingly unable to sleep, he is in insomnia. He is completely unable to achieve sleep and we see that, he is a character who is deeply troubled and keeps on losing weight as the film progresses.

Now, he does not know why this is happening except that, there is deep rooted unsettled feeling that governs him. It is only towards the end of the film that they realize that, he was involved in a hit and run accident and he did not actually bother covering up, I mean you know taking care of his victim there. So, the fact that he did something that was unacceptable to him in his normal life, compelled him to have all sorts of traumatic experiences and he basically depress this memory of having hit over someone and you know just bailed on the scene.

And this is perhaps, the reason why he is seen as a completely troubled and traumatic individual throughout the film. It is only when he is confronted, he feels he conference his, the true reason for his insomnia that he is finally able to achieve sleep. This is a classic case of Freudian depression, where traumatic memory is forced out of your conscious mind into the unconscious, but it nevertheless exerts a very strong kind of an influence on your day today life.

Another key Freudian mechanism is that of projection. This is a process when we usually use negative aspects of ourselves and we do not really recognize it as belonging to us. Thus our own dark desires are in a way disowned and expelled from our oneself. For example, to give an example a student who conspicuously feels that everybody in his class is intend on copying an on an exam would perhaps be exercising a form of projection himself.

He is unable to admit that he has tendencies to copy during the exams and these results in him projecting all these negative feelings on to his friends and the people that surrounds. So, in a fact when he is being paranoid about his fellow students copying and cheating on an exam, a Freudian psychoanalyst would perhaps argue that this is because, he has an innate tendency and a deep rooted desire to cheat in this very exam.

Later in his career, Freud would suggest the three part model of the psyche, dividing it into the ego, the superego and the id ((Refer Time: 10:38)). As you can see on the board here, this is the basic three model part of the psyche or the personality and the id is a force that roughly corresponds to the unconscious, while the ego corresponds to the conscious and the superego corresponds to the conscience itself. Now, the id is a primitive life force and it is governed by what you would call the pressure principle.

The id does not really care about you know, the consequences of actions. For example, if a person were to be completely consumed by the powers of the id, if you were feeling hungry he would perhaps look for the closest source of nutrition. He would not really care about whether this food is accessible to him, whether taking this food or consuming it would violate in some way, some other codes that govern established norms of behavior.

For example, he would not think twice before considering whether this food is something that is not accessible to him, because he does not have the money to pay for it. He would

just be interested in insinuating his own feelings that is why it is related to the unconscious. The ego on the other hand is governed by what we know as the reality principle. So, for example, even if a person is feeling extremely hungry, he might be forced to look at alternative circumstances too.

For example, he might think about whether he has the money to buy this or not or whether he is in a position to safely steal the food or not. The superego on the other hand corresponds to the conscience which again is derived from all your moral codes and your spirituality and religion and law and order and things like that. For example, a person who is completely driven by a superego would rather choose to starve himself to death rather than steal a morsel of food.

You can see, how these three levels often overlap as you can see from the diagram. Now, a final example of important Freudian terminology is perhaps that of the dream work, which is to say the process by which real events or desires are transformed into concrete dream images. Now, this can include processes such as displacement whereby one person or any event is represented by another in some form of a, through some form of a symbolic substitution.

It is also complemented by a process known as condensation, whereby a number of people events or meanings are combined and represented by a single image in the dream. We will come back to these terms in greater detail, when we discuss Jacques Lacan. Thus we understand that characters, motivation or events are represented in dreams in a very literary sort of a way, involving it is translation by the dream work of abstract ideas or feelings into concrete images.

For example an abstract idea like fear or love can find a concrete expression in a very literary way in a person's dream and this is why literary studies is interested in psychoanalytic models of criticism. Dreams then just like literature do not make explicit statements, they both tend to communicate obliquely or indirectly, avoiding direct or open statement representing meanings through concrete embodiments of time, space or action.

Freudian interpretation is popularly thought to be a matter of attributing sexual connotations to objects. So, that everyday objects like towers or ladders for instance are seen as a phallic symbol. Now, you can see immediately how this might be slightly

problematic and one of the reasons why psychoanalytic Freudian and psychoanalytic criticism is open to a great environment criticism.

For instance, the metaphor of a snake would perhaps be a very strong phallic connotation for somebody who is interested in Freud. But, you can see clearly how for instance a Victorian woman who sees the image of a snake might have completely different connotations from that of say an Indian woman, a very religious Indian woman who is perhaps used to the idea of worshipping a snake as a religious deity.

Thus Freudian terms and ideas were dealt with criticism openly in Freud's own lifetime. This has often lead to a joke in itself, because as you can clearly. You might have seen pictures of Sigmund Freud and most often Sigmund Freud is usually seen, you know holding onto a cigar or smoking a cigar. Now, the phallic connotations of smoking a cigar was a matter of great, mirth and fun to some of Freud's on critics, which even prompted him to openly declare it in anger that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

However, jokes apart Freudian interpretation is often highly ingenious rather than highly simplistic, as we shall soon see in the case of some Freudian examples. Freud believed that a dream was an escape hatch or a safety valve through which all our depressed fears and desires or memories seek an outlet into the conscious mind. The emotion in question would be sensor by the conscious mind and thus has to enter the dream in a disguise, so to speak.

Now, like I said earlier condensation is one of the processes by which this is achieved. Condensation refers to the dreams tendency to combine several themes into one dream symbol. For example, in dreams multiple dream thoughts are often combined and amalgamated into a single element of the manifest dream. To give you an example, even if you keep your work life and your personal life strictly separate, you might not be surprised to find that characters from your workplace often melded into characters from your own personal life in a dream.

Thus people and places are often seen melding into composite figures in dreams, this is exactly what the process known as condensation implies. To give you another example, imagine the case of a young man who is, who lives under the authoritarian thumb of his powerful and dominating father. Now, imagine also that he is in love with a young

French girl, they alliance which the father which his father would be vehemently and strongly oppose.

Now, Sigmund Freud would not be too surprised, if this man if this young man had recurrent dreams of a young policewoman how does this happen. Here in the dream, both the father and the French police men are associated with ideas of strictness, authority and power and coupled with the fact that he is in love with a French girl that the father disapproves of. He has different recurrent images of a French policeman which is basically his dream symbols that are condensed into one.

Here both the feared father and the desired lover are condensed into the single dream figure of the French policewoman. Freudian interpretation thus as you can see has always been of considerable interest to literary critics. The basic reason here again is that the unconscious like the poem or the novel or the play cannot speak directly or explicitly, but thus so through images, symbols, emblems and metaphors.

Likewise, literature too is not involved with making direct or explicit statements about life, but it is more concerned with showing and expressing experience through images, symbols, metaphors and so on. However, because the statements made here are not explicit, there is an inevitable element of judgment that is involved and consequently, psychoanalytic interpretations of literature are often controversial. Now, this can be very well illustrated by the example of the snake metaphor that we discussed earlier.

Now, a discussion of Freud and his psychoanalytic theories also warrants a brief note on archetypal criticism which was in this context, significantly developed by his protégé Carl Gustav Jung, who worked together with Freud for many years before parting ways and developing radically different theories. The theories of Carl Gustav Jung, which we know today as archetypal criticism will be taken up in the next module.

Thank you.