



Psychoanalytical Study of Novella “The Vegetarian”; Exploring the Transformation of Yeonge-hye’s from Neurosis to Psychosis

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the dream sequence of yeonge-hye in the novella “The Vegetarian” under the framework of psychoanalytical approach based on the “dream interpretation” work of Sigmund Freud. Language and human psyche are the significant medium of expression of human unconsciousness and dream interpretation. This study emphasises on elements within dream representation in form of past, unconscious imageries and personal past experience of the protagonist in the novella. The identity crisis of protagonist has been represented as transformation of her neurosis to psychosis as author’s childhood trauma representation. Dream is the effective key to uncover the human unconsciousness in psychoanalysis. By applying the Dream theory of Freud as analysis of manifested dream, latent content and dream work of the dream as well as identifies the stages of dream condensation, displacement, symbolization and secondary revision. This study will unfold that how dreams are used to reveal the unconscious mechanism of human being in which meanings are hidden in the imageries, symbols and metaphorical representation of the dream. This study will represent the inner world of the protagonist as an escape from reality and her transformation from neurosis to psychosis in form of dream sequences.



Introduction

Psychoanalysis and dream interpretation are the significant tools for understanding the human psyche and these have been used for analysing profound insights in form of motivations, conflicts and unconscious desires of characters in the literary writing. The study in perspective of psychoanalytical theories delves in such a way in which unconsciousness and dream have been analysed as a significant element as a mode of revealing psychological and symbolic representation of character’s psyche in literary writing. Freudian psychoanalysis focusses on the

human unconsciousness of mind, repression and structures of human psyche as analysing the Id, ego and superego of characters and behaviours in the literary writings (Lapsley & Stey, 2012). By examining the manifested content in the form of the character's desires, dreams and behavioural representation in the text, the Freud theory has been applied for uncovering the hidden meaning as latent content. Psychoanalysis focusses human psyche in form of interconnectedness of meaning and identity as representation of unconsciousness of human beings and cultural influences of society. It plays a significant role in creating relationship between literature and culture and consciousness of mind. It articulates human anxieties in form of cultural formation and unconsciousness that represents meaning to the readers. In Freud's work "The Interpretation of Dreams" addresses the dreams as interconnectedness of wishes fulfillment (Freud, 1900/1953, p. 240). He has divided the dream content into three parts manifest content, latent content and dream work. Manifest content of the dream is the representation of experiential events and symbolic imageries of the real world. Latent content of the dream is the indirect or hidden or repressed desires that has been unconsciously driven in form of dream. "Dream work" has the four integral stages as a dream process. These "dream work" stages are condensation, displacement, symbolization and secondary revision. Condensation is the image of multiple ideas that are represented in to singular visualization. Displacement is the process of transference of hidden desires and emotions as latent content of dream to the understanding and interpretation and this focusses on significant and insignificant elements in the dream. Symbolization is stage in which different symbolic representation have been used for repressing desires. It provides abstract images as latent content of the dream. Secondary revision is the process of providing logical and coherent understanding of dream representation (Freud, 1900). This will attempt to understand and explore the meanings of the human subconsciousness mental representation without altering the whole phenomenon. In this way, dreaming as presentation of reality in surrealist literature advocates ambiguity in form of uncertain in real and unreal state. Mostly it is employed as disorder. In dreams human reaches to that level in which he or she does according to his or her wishes but in reality, he or she is living in real world and mentally in hyperreal world beyond reality.

Statement of the Problem

Many themes have been addressed on Hang Kang's novella "The Vegetarian". But the dream interpretation and psychoanalysis have not been addressed on this novella. This research paper aims to highlight the psychoanalysis and dream imageries with identification of Freud's "dream work" and implied meanings in dream sequences in the novella. So that how dream interpretation shapes the narrative and theme of this novella.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the intended meaning manifestation in form manifest content of dream in the text "The Vegetarian"
2. Explore the Yeonge hye's neurosis and dream sequence as symbolic representation of Hang Kang's subconscious
3. Analyse the latent content of dream sequences convey the intended meaning in the novella "The Vegetarian"

Research Questions

Analysing the Sense of Interconnectedness of dream and Unconsciousness meaning Manifestation within the Hang Kang's Novella "The Vegetarian"

1. How does the Hang Kang's "The Vegetarian" intend the sense of manifest content of dream sequence?
2. How does the Yeonge hye's neurosis and dream sequence use to manifest the symbolic expression of author's subconsciousness?
3. How does the latent content of dream sequences convey the intended meaning in the novella "The Vegetarian"?

Significance of the Study

This study will highlight dream sequences and Freud's "dream work" is in detail employed in The Vegetarian and how these symbolic imageries and dream sequences contribute to overall implied meanings interpretation of the novella. It will establish a detail understanding of how dream components identification that contribute to the as whole narrative structures and character's metamorphosis in the text to assess the impact of surrealistic symbolism on readers. This analysis in this study will identify dream sequences and narrative structure in The Vegetarian that domain has not been addressed yet. This will contribute as new perspective in the meaning interpretation of this novella and broader discourse presented as integration of literature and unconsciousness of human being.

Literature Review

The study on Shakespeare's "The Midsummer Night" has been employed the psychoanalytical conception through analysing the dreams and character's experiences in the forest as representation of unconscious mind significant aspect of human experience (Jacobs, 2017). The study on novel "The Wind-up Bird Chronicle" by Haruki Murakami has been employed the psychanalysis on dreams and real-world allowing reader to confront unconscious desires and unresolved conflicts. Dream has been used as powerful tool for exploration of the protagonist's psyche and self-realization journey (Nygren, 2009). This study on novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez has been explored under Jungian archetypes and collective unconscious perspective in which protagonist has been expressed his quest for self-discovery and feeling of judgement between good and evil. (Stjepović & Stjepović, 2013). In Kafka's novel "A Country Doctor" nightmare has been represented. The study has been explored the Freudian Id, ego and superego that are presented through character's actions and decisions in form of unconscious conflicts (Mirmobin & Shabanirad, 2015). The case study has been conducted on "Metamorphosis" by Agnon as representation of dream sequences serve as mean of reflecting unresolved conflicts and unconscious desires. This study has confronted the past with interconnectedness of actions with unconscious psyche of the protagonist in the novel (Coffin, 2015). The study has aimed to explore the unconscious world in form of dream representation as genuine reservoir of persons own determinism in form of autonomous energies. The unconscious content and repressed desires are represented as symbolic presentation through the process of condensation. Examining the dream content with exploration of proper comprehension about the psyche of dreamer is the main essence of psychoanalysis. This has been significantly used for examining the hidden meanings of the text (Dumitrescu, 2019). This has applied Freudian concept of Oedipus complex and tripartite model of human psyche on Victorian novel "Wuthering Heights" by Jan Eyre as analysis on character's behaviours and motivations. This study as explored the Catherine's struggle of her own internal repression in form of her desires and societal repression in form of expectation as reflection of conflict between protagonist's Id, ego and superego (Giordano, 2020). This study critically has analysed Freud's monolithic notion of repression by fragmenting it into four underlying binaries and revises his assertions in accordance with modern psychoanalytic theoretical frameworks, thereby providing explicit directives for the clinical implementation of these concepts. This occurrence can be partially ascribed to a reflexive and inadequately informed

avoidance of Freudian meta psychological paradigms, and partially to a fixation on 'primitive' and 'more profound' cognitive conditions, a perspective that posits repression operates exclusively within the parameters of 'higher-order' or 'neurotic' expressions of psychopathology (Akhtar, 2020). The study has been explored the world of cinematography through revealing the hidden meanings of symbols used in dream and psyche representation in the movies as content analysis. This is also used to uncover the unconscious meanings representation through using the technique of imaginations and dreams representation the movies and cinema (Quiroga, 2022). The study in which two novels “The Beet Queen” and “The bingo Palace” have been analysed as Freudian psychoanalytical exploration in which the Karl Adre presented as bisexual and dream sequences as representation of his repressed desires in its formative events in the novel. This has confronted the powerful impulsive tool as background for explanation of his adulthood that has arisen from the unconscious mind of him (Assaad, 2023). The psychoanalytical investigation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* reveals a compelling odyssey into the complexities of human psychology and societal interactions. Shakespeare, celebrated for his profound insights into the human mind, utilizes this pivotal work to explore the multifaceted dimensions of his characters' motivations, aspirations, and conflicts. This literary odyssey serves as a sophisticated analysis of unconscious drives, familial connections, camaraderie, and the pervasive influence of societal biases. Through the framework of psychoanalysis, we traverse the intricate network of characters including Shylock, Portia, Antonio, and Bassanio, disentangling the concealed intricacies that inform their behavior and interpersonal dynamics. The play transforms into a psychological terrain wherein Freudian, Jungian, and Lacanian theories are employed to elucidate the foundational motivations and challenges faced by the characters (Devi, 2023).

The study in which psychoanalysis as an approach has been used to explore the dreams and unconscious mind within the Turkish novel by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. The protagonist has been analysed in his profound expression as elements childhood trauma, identity crisis and dream sequences for revealing the unconsciousness. This has been used as unconscious mechanisms for expressing hidden meanings as symbolic and metaphorical representation (Botalić & Žunić, 2024).

The study as an exploration of psychoanalysis of protagonist Ato's dream in the novel “The Dilemma of a Ghost” has been framed under Carl Jung's theoretical construction of the collective unconsciousness. In this slave trade has been represented as signifier of meaning expression as an inherited trauma within unconscious collectiveness. Through archetypes of Jungian conception, dreams have been used to address the suppressed desires as an ancestral past post-colonial identity representation and interconnectedness between conscious and unconscious. This has portrayed dreamscape as historical meaning illustration in form of tension between individuality and collective identities. Ato's inner journey interplays self-discovery within dilemma of colonialism (“Dream as a Gateway to the Collective Unconscious: A Jungian Interpretation of Ato's Dream in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*,” 2024).

The study in which the dream has been analysed and interpreted with three significant features cathexis, catharsis and anxiety that indirectly interconnected with dream content in form latent and manifested content. This study explores the psychodynamics of dreams, building on S. Freud's “The Interpretation of Dreams,” and identifies three key psychodynamic points (cathexis, catharsis, and basic anxiety) that shape dream content and character (Ovcharov, 2024). The study on the novel “Az-Zayni Barakat” by Egyptian writer significantly focusses on the characters unconscious world in form of id, ego and superego exploration in the whole novel setting. The implementation of psychoanalytic frameworks in literary examination, particularly in relation to ‘Az-Zayni Barakat,’ sheds light on the core motivations and internal struggles of characters by analysing the dynamics between the id, ego, and superego, thus underscoring their inherent aspirations, logical

thought processes, and ethical challenges amid their social contexts. (Fauziyah & Khotimah, 2024).

The application of psychoanalytic theory in literary analysis, as demonstrated in Natta's examination of *Rumah Tanpa Cahaya*, elucidates the latent drives and discordances by scrutinizing the interaction among desire, reality, and ethical considerations, thereby augmenting the comprehension of character intricacy and the significance of narrative. The present study aims to explore the psychological discord encountered by the principal character, Natta, through the lens of Sigmund Freud's personality framework (id, ego, superego), which exemplifies the mental strife engendered by familial interactions. The employed methodology encompasses a hermeneutic qualitative analysis, with an emphasis on symbolic and textual interpretation. The findings derived from the analysis indicate that Natta grapples with an internal conflict among her desires (id), her perceptions of reality (ego), and her ethical principles (superego), particularly in the context of her relationship with her younger sibling, Alie, who faces alienation from their family. (Kurniawati et al., 2025).

Methods and Materials

The theoretical framework adopted in this research study is identification of dream imageries delineated through the employment of Freud's Theory of Dream and identification of "dream work". The psychoanalysis provides analysis as an exploration of "pure psychic automation" in the text alongside psychoanalysis of protagonist. The tripartite model and dream interpretation stages of Sigmund Freud have been employed on the novella so that the implied meaning of surrealistic imageries have been explored.

Andre Breton's manifesto as psychoanalysis is about the power of imagination and expression suppress by the rationale thinking. It is interconnected to the irrational or unconscious mind of human psyche. Pure psychic automation is an implied expressions either in verbal or written form as true function of imagination in all aesthetic and moral manifestation with absence of all control of rationality and reasoning. In this pure psychic automation includes the expression in form of dreams, self-talk and soliloquies in the text. It is more related to subconsciousness and unconsciousness of the human psyche in which absence of rational control has been observed. Theory of Psychanalysis by Sigmund Freud has been the theoretical framework as tripartite model that has been dealt with unconsciousness and subconsciousness. The tripartite model of Freud focusses on Id, superego and ego of human behaviour and personality analysis. This psychoanalytical interpretation helps to find out the hidden meaning of literary text. Id is an immediate gratification or power of pleasure-seeking part of human psyche. Ego is rational behaviour of human being in the real world. Superego is the moral, societal or parental framing behaviour pattern of human being. Freud's dream interpretation (1900) includes exploration of unconscious expression of human being as in the form of manifest content, latent content and dream work. Manifest content is dream's operated expression. Latent content focusses on symbolic expression of dream with hidden meaning interpretation. Dream work is the procedural operation of unconsciousness depiction of human being in which expression of suppressed desires have been represented as in a less disturbing way. This includes the stages of dream such displacement, condensation, symbolization and free association. Displacement is stage of dream in which suppressed desires shift from one object to another as emotional significance. Condensation involves many of ideas interpretations from one scenario of dream. Symbolization is symbolic expression or coded manifestation of dream in which no rational interconnectedness has been observed. Free Association has been the interconnectedness of the latent content of dream with real world. It uncovers the hidden meaning of the dream with creating the association with human's suppressed desires. It paves the way to reach the unconscious mind of human beings through

connecting the symbolic expression of human dreams with suppressed desire expression. This study aims to bridge between gaps of unconscious and consciousness world of Han Kang's protagonist. This study highlights the interconnectedness of Yeong-hye's suppressed desires in form of dream sequence and neurosis in form of worldly living of her.

Results and Discussion

The text in "The Vegetarian" is structured in a triptych manner that also employs surrealistic construction. Three panels of narrative in the text are symbolic representation of implied meaning as unconscious mind of protagonist Yeong-hye. This is just like three panel painted imageries represent abstract intended idea of painter with material thing paint colours. In this same way Yeong-hye's narrative is just like abstract idea presented through three other characters of novella. Yeong-hye's narrative is in fragmented construction and conveyed through dream sequences only. In very start her state of mind has been presented by Han Kang as "I'm lost", "Frightened", "Cold", "frozen ravine" and "red barn-like building". And "try to push the past" is her regret of previous life as meat eater. Her fear for such people whom are eating meat joyfully in park picnic and her words "my clothes still wet with blood", "my bloody mouth" and "mouth with crimson blood" are presented her hatred for meat. Blood is also a symbol of oppression and violence. The word "Scarlet" has been used for blood. Her words also represent ambiguous state of mind of Yeong-hye that is significant feature of surrealism e.g. "Familiar and yet not that vivid, strange, horribly uncanny feeling". Because of the past fear, she has a strange and weird feeling and narrates her feelings with use of "blood" more in her whole narration. "Dawn of the next day" and "The pool of blood in the barn" use for her face represent subconscious fear of consumers that how they depend on capitalist monopoly. Meat selling is a giant capitalistic monopoly and implied dependency of consumers on capitalists. Yeong-hye's dream is the repressed desires that she has faced in society through representation of opting vegetarianism. In dream of the murder, she uses the words murderer or murdered both have hazy difference for the capitalists who slaughter the animals and consumers who are happily eating the meat. Ambiguous situation has been narrated by Yeong-hye in representation of dreams. Rebellion has been sustained in surrealistic fiction against any one idea and in this novella Yeong-hye also represents the rebellious behaviour through opting vegetarianism within South Korean culture in meat lover society. Her feeling has been suppressed in words "tried to mask with affection". "The mask is coming off" is represented her repressed desires coming out with her consistently coming of dream again and again. Her hands around someone's throat are also representation of hatred for animal slaughters and somehow blaming all humans for this animal killing, considering herself in it through saying word my hands again and again. Through mentioning of different body parts of Yeong-hye as weapon and involvement in animal slaughtering such as hands, stomach, teeth's, fingers and all body instead breast. Only breast is liberated through her one time and other time she objectifies her breast and is becoming pointed like weapon. This also shows her breast's involvement in slaughtering of animals as like all human community of meat eater. Objectification of body parts of Yeong-hye and projected as weapon is representation of her wish of de-humanization that has not been possible for any human being. The only thing she saves her life through the act of vegetarianism and also will of getting desires that have been suppressed through her family, cultural values and community as well. Yeong-hye's not wearing bra is a representation of going against with conventions of South Korean cultural system as in party scene females are talking about her ill-manner act and males seem her bold and sex appealing but Han Kang represents it as weapon for all capitalists through not becoming consumer anymore and as vegetarian opting squeezes breast as pointed symbolic presentation of an alarming act for capitalists of no more dependency on this chain of dependency. Like in these lines "the Vietnam War hero, had actually struck his rebellious daughter in the face and physically forced a lump of meat into her mouth", Father has also

symbolic significance in this novella as his coercive behaviour with yeonge-hye while using force for opening mouth of her and tries to feed her meat but her repulsive act scene in real life of her and this has been resented as in form of dream death of a dog through the chain of her father motorcycle ruthlessly by running in circles seven times. That is gone into dog's death and proud moment for father in the society that dog is the representation of threat and harm for humans because these dogs bite humans. Humans are represented as capitalists and dog is represented as those whom goes against this monopoly just like ideology of vegetarianism yeonge-hye in the novella. Yeonge-hye's wrist is ok but her feeling of pain in her chest also represents her pain for animal slaughtering and this leads toward her mentally ill state of mind because of outcome of suppressed desires. All this has been represented in the dreams of yeonge-hye that dreaming is a significant technique of surrealist fiction this has been used by Han Kang in the text. Through the unconscious dreams of yeonge-hye represents the conscious world interconnectedness and transference of implied meaning to readers. She has used words for meat eater humans as butcher bodies. And line of her is nobody helps her, saves her and make her breathe. This is her unacceptance within society as vegetarian and deconstruct the ideology of meat selling chain of capitalism always resistant process as survival. Id of yeonge-hye is her intrinsic desire of becoming vegetarian that is repressed or unfulfillment leads towards her mental abnormal behaviours act in throughout novella. There is a representation of another character in the novella the husband of her sister has the same intrinsic desire of seeking pornography capture in a film. That has been fulfilled through yeonge-hye's mental illness and sexual manipulation that leads him to a normal person. But yeonge-hye doesn't fulfills her Id that's why she leads toward mentally severe illness that becomes schizophrenia. In filming pornography in the novella has also symbolic significance because yeonge-hye wants to become a plant and this is her id basically wanted to dehumanize herself. Own her naked body painting of flowers, painting and leaves is basically an act of fulfillment of id for her. Representation of her apparent attainment of id though painting plants on her body has been manipulated by the pornographer and getting utmost pleasures of sex through her naked sex film capturing and attainment of his sex as id desire fulfillment. And other meaning is also implied in this scenario; both are in state of utmost pleasure of fulfillment of Id leads toward the best pornography phenomenon as happy feeling in both human being's compulsory for this film capturing. Yeonge-hye's happiness of fulfillment of id in form plant painting on her body as wants to become a plant such as in lines "the image of a blue flower on a woman's buttocks, its petals opening outward" and sister's husband's happiness of fulfillment of id in form of utmost pleasure in sex with her that hasn't attained through his wife. This is also significant representation of chain relationship of humans as meat eater consumer and capitalists' meat selling industry. Both are happily performed this phenomenon just like the yeonge-hye becoming plant in painting her body and sex pleasure attainment capture in pornography. Basically, pornography is the same industry in which the purchaser or consumer and the seller as capitalists same like meat selling industry. The words in text for Mongolian marks are "bluish mark with a wash of light green, fainter than the mark itself". Mongolian marks on yeonge-hye's body have also significance in south Korean culture. In her culture that birth mark on child is because of south Korean goddess whom slaps inborn child so that child comes out without labour pain. Basically, that birth marks on child as Mongolian mark is symbol of survival, resistance and tolerance for humanity and it is related yeonge-hye's resilience and tolerance for survival against the culture, family and dominant system of capitalism. In these words, the significance of Mongolian marks in the field of pornography has been as well such as "The image of a man and woman, their bodies made brilliant with painted flowers, having sex against a background of unutterable silence". These lines also represent the fulfilment of Id of yeonge-hye as green sap through vagina and of pornographer's pleasure as in text "A green sap, like that which oozes from bruised leaves, began to flow out from her vagina when he entered her". Her urge of becoming a plant has been expressed in form different plant-based words for her in each act specially the Id fulfilling acts in the world. Even she

talks to her sister as she is a plant like in her lines in the text “leaves are growing out of my body; roots are sprouting out of my hands”. In this she fulfills her desire of dehumanizing herself and love for plant eating as become a plant just like she has used words for meat eater as blood. And also, this study endorses the feature of surrealism as creating the paradoxical ideas leading scenario such as for consumerism and capitalism in form of vegetarianism and meat-eating industry and pornography industry. It also endorses surrealism as expressing “pure psychic automation” in form of naked body painted with plants and having feeling of becoming plant is totally irrational act for a common human being but in this novella, it happens because of repression of Id leads toward illness of yeonge-hye. And “veristic” of surrealism has been achieved through the dream sequence of yeonge-hye for expression of her unconsciousness.

This study answers the establish questions such as this novella intends the interplay of unconsciousness and surrealistic imageries. Such as this study endorses the feature of surrealism as creating the paradoxical ideas leading scenario such as for consumerism and capitalism in form of vegetarianism and meat-eating industry and pornography industry. It also endorses surrealism as expressing “pure psychic automation” in form of naked body painted with plants and having feeling of becoming plant is totally irrational act for a common human being but in this novella, it happens because of repression of Id leads toward illness of yeonge-hye. And “veristic” of surrealism has been achieved through the dream sequence of yeonge-hye for expression of her unconsciousness. Painting on the body of yeonge-hye itself is also an essence of surrealism as conveying meaning through colour painting. Rebellion is also an essence of surrealism in this yeonge-hye character and her survival in the South Korean meat eater society. Ambiguous feeling in the start and yeonge-hye leads toward mental illness this is also profound feature of surrealism. Yeonge-hye’s desire of becoming plant and dream sequences in form of “blood” and “murderer or murdered” are representation of dehumanizing desires and relationship of capitalism and consumers. Neurosis of yeonge-hye is also representation of Han Kang’s subconsciousness. In her twelve years, she has gone through Gwangju massacre that has been happened because of south Korean dictatorship against the democratic movement of the people. That bloodshed on people has been represented in form of yeonge-hye’s dream and de-humanizing desire and want to become plant. Basically, it is also expressed Han Kang love for south Korean poet Yi Sang whom has the urge of becoming plant in his verses. He has an ideology of human should be the plant.

Conclusion

Psychological analysis of dream sequences has focussed an effective domain of revealing human unconscious mind as latent content of dream and as human behaviour and perceptions. Dream sequences, automation, surrealist techniques and “dream work” have been used for exploring yeonge-hye’s behaviour and unconscious mind that has been transformed into her ill mental health as leading towards neurosis to psychosis. This has explored the intersection of Hang kang’s subconscious mind revelation as Gwangju massacre incident with broader cultural thematic consideration of novella. This novella has proven to be a versatile and powerful medium for psychological exploration. As this study continue to explore the unconscious mind through literature, this has uncovered new insights into the hidden aspects of the human psyche, revealing its profound impact on our thoughts, feelings, and actions. The intersection of surrealism and psychological analysis in this novella has undoubtedly remained a rich and fertile area of study, offering new perspectives on the unconscious mind and its role in shaping human behavior. Psychoanalysis and dream interpretation have proven to be powerful tools in uncovering the deeper psychological and symbolic layers within this novella. By applying Freudian theory of dream to this specific novella, critics and readers can gain a more profound understanding of the characters' motivations, conflicts, and unconscious desires. The use of dreams as a narrative device further enhances this understanding, allowing authors to explore the inner lives of their characters

in a way that transcends the conscious mind. Surrealism and psychoanalysis domain have provided a powerful lens through which novelists have explored the unconscious mind, revealing its hidden aspects and their profound impact on human behavior and perception. Through the use of dream sequences, automatism, and other surrealist techniques, authors have been able to tap into the unconscious mind, revealing its hidden contents and exploring its influence on human behavior.

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