



Horror Novels made into Movies: An analysis from the Psychological Perspective

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Abstract : *We are dealing with the theory of psychoanalysis being applied on the novels. It helps us better in better understanding of human behavior. In our research we have applied psychoanalytic theory on the three novels- "The Silence of the Lambs" by Thomas Harris, "Dracula" by Bram Stoker and "The Shining" by Stephen King, as psychoanalysis helps us to understand literary text which are about human behavior.*

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis, conscious, preconscious, unconscious, id, ego, superego, repression, Oedipal crisis.*

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Introduction :

Horror Novels and Movies: Horror fiction is a genre of literature which has the capacity to frighten. It generally focuses on death, after life and evil. It was reformulated in 18th Century as Gothic Horror with the publication of Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto". In the words of H.P. Lovecraft, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is the fear of the unknown." Horror films are popular because they speak about the basic human condition, their existential fear and their attempt to overcome that fear." For some, horror movies exacerbate existence fear, yet for many others, watching a horror film is a way to put existential fear into its proper perspective. Horror film thus seek to elicit a negative emotional reaction as the viewers experience fear and terror while watching the movie.

Certain basic characteristics are to be seen in all horror works like the presence of the supernatural beings against whom the hero is supposed to fight. Typically, the endings are left unresolved for it gives the audience a sense that the threat still waits around the corner.

Psychoanalytic Criticism : Sigmund Freud, the famous psychoanalytic critic, has divided human mind into three parts:-

1. The conscious mind , which are present perceptions, memories, thoughts, feelings.
2. Working closely with the conscious mind is what Freud called the preconscious, which is also known as available memory i.e. anything that can easily be made conscious, the memories you are not at the moment thinking about but can readily bring to mind.
3. The largest part is the unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins there, such as our drives or instincts that are there because we cannot bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions associated with trauma.

He has also talked about Id, Ego and Superego in his theory:-

1. ID- The nervous system, as id, translates the organism's needs into motivational forces called in German, Trieben, which has been translated as instincts or drives. Freud also called them wishes. This translation from need to wish is called the primary process. It works on pleasure principle means all needs should be satisfied immediately.
2. EGO- The ego relates the organism to reality by means of its consciousness, and it searches for objects to satisfy the wishes that id creates to represent the organism needs. The problem solving activity is called the secondary process. It works on reality principle which says "take

care of a need as soon as an appropriate object is found."

3. SUPEREGO- It decides what is right or wrong. It has two aspects- conscience and ego ideal. Ego ideal consists of rules for good behavior, standard of excellence toward which the ego must strive.

Oedipal crisis is yet another term formulated by Freud according to which the child is attracted towards the parent of the opposite sex.

After being acquainted with these terms given by Freud let us now look at the three novels through psychoanalytical perspective:-

1. The Silence of The Lambs
2. Dracula
3. The Shining

About the Novels :

"The Silence of the Lambs" : The author of *The Silence of the Lambs* is Thomas Harris and the novel was published in 1988. It is a masterpiece of a story about serial killings. Thomas Harris's suspenseful novel entitled "The Silence of the Lambs", expresses paramount examples of how psychoanalysis can be applied to people we recognize everyday as insane. The ideas sprung from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis are techniques used to explore underlying meanings within one's lifestyle. The combination and construction of three elements of unconsciousness- Id, Ego and Super Ego is shown to viewers. The observation in characterization of Clarice Starling (protagonist), how she visualized her id, ego and superego to seek for some answers of Hannibal's crimes is shown. *The Silence of the Lambs* is adapted into an American thriller film in 1991 directed by Jonathan Demme.

The title of the book refers to Clarice Starling being haunted by the screaming she heard from

the lambs. When she was about ten years old, her father was shot when responding to a robbery; he died a month after the incident. Starling was sent to live with her uncle on Montana sheep and horse farm, from which she briefly ran away in horror when she witnessed the lambs being slaughtered.

James Gumbs is an antagonist who is a psyche killer. He had a traumatic childhood. Gumb was abandoned by his mother- an alcoholic prostitute who misspelled "James" in his birth certificate and was taken into foster care at the age of two. He lived in foster homes until ten, after which he was adopted by his grandparents, who became his first victims when he impulsively murdered them at the age of twelve. He makes dresses from the patches of the skin removed from his victims. His psyche is reflected through the way he tortured his victims.

"Hannibal the cannibal" is one of the most important character in the history of horror fiction featured in this novel. Unconsciousness is constructed among the novel and movie, *The Silence of the Lambs* through main characters Clarice Starling and Dr. Hannibal Lecter. In making easily to understand about unconsciousness, psychoanalysis theory is chosen in order to find easily the diversity about the unconsciousness described between the novel and movie by combining structural devices that are id, ego and superego.

Dracula : The author of *Dracula* is Abraham "Bram" Stoker. He was an Irish writer. In his honor, the Horror Writers Association recognizes "superior achievement" in horror writing with the Bram Stoker Award. Stoker's "Dracula" is an epistolary novel, written as collection of diary entries, telegrams and letters from the characters, as well as clippings from the Whitby and London newspapers. Stoker's inspiration for the story was a visit to Slains Castle near Aberdeen. The bleak spot provided an excellent backdrop for his creation.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as an excellent horror thriller exposes deepest part of human psyche. This novel has been adapted into many movies and series but Francis Ford Coppola's movie "Bram Stoker's Dracula" is the most accurate and entertaining version. The novel, *Dracula*, and the adaptation to the film of this same novel differ for obvious reasons. The dates they were released, the audience they target and the fact the novel relies on imagery created by the mind and immaculate writing skills to create such imagery where as the film relies on visual imagery and in the same respect immaculate film techniques.

The tale begins with Jonathan Harker, a young English lawyer, travelling to the Castle Dracula, which is located in Transylvania. Dracula is portrayed a potentially immortal since the beginning. He is the personification of superstition, irrationality and the darkness and is opposite of rational Christian modern Western Civilization. Dracula is repressed unconscious of Harker's society. He is the manifestation of the darker side of human society, which is death, sex and darkness. The novel's first part seems to fit the pattern of the development of paranoia in Jonathan's character. The young lawyer's behavior turns from the absolute skepticism of a rational mind into a presumed suicide while trying to escape from the Devil's claws of the Count. Harker's objectivity and self-assurance is quickly turned into paranoia as soon as he encounters Dracula.

Mina Murray is the ultimate Victorian women. She is presented as the group's intellectual and spiritual centre. Van Helsing, as father figure provides the values of tradition and technical knowledge. The other men mainly provide action. Van Helsing's praise of Mina testifies to the fact that she is indeed the embodiment of the virtues of the age. Like all mankind, Mina too is split into conscious and unconscious.

The characters in *Dracula* discover the monster in the appearance of their childish wishes. At first, they think of the monster as another being, but eventually they recognize the monster as related to themselves. Finally the destruction of

Dracula transforms the characters repressed mind and sets them free by neutralizing it to the unconscious.

Thus, Bram Stoker's "Dracula" proves to be an excellent example of a literary masterpiece, and in that it may be said to be always open to many interpretations, just like the psychological interpretation, which is our topic and is present in this novel.

The Shining : *The Shining* is a horror novel by the well known contemporary writer Stephen King. The novel was published in 1977 and was adapted into a feature film. The novel revolves around the protagonist Jack Torrance and his family. The story is set in a fictional hotel named Overlook where Jack Torrance gets a job of winter caretaker. Danny, his son, possesses an array of psychic abilities that allows him to see the horrific past of the hotel. The hotel is haunted with supernatural elements. The ghost present in the hotel provokes Jack to kill his own family but due to an accident he himself was killed.

The reversal of the Oedipus Complex is to be seen in the novel. His Id and Superego are overwhelmed by a flurry of emotions and desires- the typical ones: sex, alcohol as well as more covert ones: domestic bliss and external acknowledgement of his masculine roles. He longs to kill his own son and this hinders the desires of his Id. He types only one phrase "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" in his writings in order to revert his child like psyche. The concept of displacement is also seen in the novel. Jack, the stronger individual, displaces all his hindrances on his wife Wendy, the weak and self-deprecatory persona. Thus, it is a horrific family drama where the natural and supernatural meets. It exposes the horrors of identity crisis.

Conclusion :

Horror fiction aims to frighten or disgust its readers. In all the three novels we have discussed the theme of supernatural, isolation, violence, evil and the gloomy side of the world. The writers have

tried their best to explore these themes in their works.

In the novel *The Silence of the Lambs*, we have seen the psyche and abnormalities which is dangerous for human kind. In the novel *Dracula*, Bram Stoker has represented Dracula as the darkest pit of human psyche. Thus, the novel proves to be an excellent example of a literary masterpiece. In the novel *The Shining*, Stephen King focuses on isolation. *The Shining* takes deep family-based fears and brings them to life, all the while maintaining a sense of hope.

Since, psychoanalysis helps us better to understand human behavior, it must certainly then be able to help us understand literary text which are about human behavior. This is what to be seen by the application of psychoanalytic theory in the novel taken up by us. Thus, we have dealt with the psychoanalytical approach of all the three novels in detail.

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