

Reading English Literature through Anthropology and Psychoanalysis

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Abstract

English literature has become such a discipline that opens the door for multidimensional perspectives through having linked up with other fields of education that ensures to dive deeper into the ocean of knowledge. Anthropology covers the study of human beings and the culture associated with them and English literature deals with the same things which actually make them complement each other. The novel, *Heart of Darkness*, one of the prominent pieces of English Literature where the portrayal of the culture of Africa gets important, becomes the key element of study in anthropology. Literature has secured the source of study in the field of psychoanalysis as human soul rules both the fields. In *Sultana's Dream*, there is an illustration how the repressed desires get revealed through dreams. Lucidly, the affinity of literature with other departments of knowledge magnifies the space to originate new discourses. Hence, this paper intends to focus on the root of English and its intimacy with anthropology and psychoanalysis.

Keywords: English Literature, Culture, Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, Post-colonialism, dream, repressed desires

Introduction

Before sixteenth century, English literature was not listed as an academic arena of knowledge, but it has gained enormous popularity of late as it creates a lot of chances to gather knowledge about human life. It is true that to have the dignity as an academic discipline, it has to undergo plenty of criticisms, fortunately, all the criticisms fail to disbar it from being a major discipline. English Literature does not cover human life at the surface level, it includes all the elements like culture, society, language, etc. associated with it and their impacts on the human beings. Its emergence as an academic discipline has paved the way for more knowledge as it gets attached with other sectors of studies like sociology, psychology, philosophy, theology, economics, anthropology etc. These are intimately associated with literature as it helps to reflect them through different genres. Specially, Anthropology and Psychoanalysis study the nature and surrounding of human beings which are the inseparable organs of literature. Anthropology deals with the evolution of human beings, culture and other constituents related to human kind that are closely intimated in English literature. In *Heart of Darkness*, the portrayal of the culture of

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Africa has become the central point of discussion in anthropology which implies the relation between anthropology and English Literature. To interpret deeply the characters of any literary piece, Psychoanalysis is a badly needed theory. Sultana's Dream can be construed under the theory of psychoanalysis.

Origin of English Literature

'English Literature' is one of the disciplines which appeal to the students for its depth and historical diversity and specially aristocracy that help them understand the very meaning of life and humanity associated with it. We generally choose this discipline as our major to have better understanding of life in relation to humanity as well as to know the meaning of life. English literature and language open the door of multiple dimensional knowledge as they are closely connected with other disciplines like psychology, sociology anthropology etc.

To know about the origin of literature, we need to dive into the ocean of different researches to know the meaning of it. It can be defined as 'imaginative' which means not true. Again, it carries the trace of truth. Eagleton (1996) asserts "In the English late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the word 'novel' seems to have been used about both true and fictional events...". There is actually no distinct definition of literature as it cannot be narrowed down. English literature does not only mean Shakespeare, Marvell or Milton, it stretches its boundaries to the essays, sermons, biographies, theories, criticism etc.

By the 19th century, other factors contributed to bringing English into academia. The most remarkable factor which helped the flourishing of English as an academic discipline was the failure of religion. Also, while English was not a direct substitute for religion, it held a remarkably similar discourse. Like religion, it was capable of operating at every social level, and it had a pacifying influence. George Gordon, an early Professor of English Literature at Oxford said at this time: England is sick, and English literature must save it. The Churches (as I understand) having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature has now a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the State (Eagleton, 1996, 20).

It has not been listed as a subject in the university before 19th century as to doubt English as an academic subject is reflected in the universities like Oxford and Cambridge. In the late 19th century, it is decided that the literature is to be taught along with language from which literature still could not free itself. Edward Freeman, the professor of History avers the following.

We are told that the study of literature 'Cultivates the taste, educates the sympathies and enlarges the mind'. These are excellent things, we only cannot examine tastes and sympathies. Examiners must have technical and positive information to examine (Barry, 2010).

English literature does not require any empirical methods or scientific information which pulls back its being an academic arena. Lately, English literature and language having relation with other disciplines create a space for further studies and research activities.

The most important is certainly that English as a university discipline is the result of development in several European countries, and that these also influenced the way English was institutionalized in England. Especially the exchange between England and Germany, terminated by the First World War, is of interest here. English studies has created its own place by adding remarkable dimensions to other disciplines., the perception of dimension has been made easier by the gradual emergence of Europe as a cultural and political entity. In the field of English, this was marked by the foundation of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) in the late 1980's, significantly on the basis of an English initiative and first contacts with German Anglistik. Writing history means not only recording events, but shaping a narrative of the past from them, from a specific perspective, determined in turn by one's interests (Engler, 2000).

"In the English-speaking world, the rise of literature began in 18th century England. In this period literature became dislocated from everyday social life. As literature (along with art) became a discrete entity that was no longer woven into social relations but seen as a separate thing or isolate experience, it became capable of being analyzed and given a raised status. This was also the rise of the aesthetic, and the work of Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Coleridge and others were produced on this subject."

English as a discipline continued to flourish with its own dignity. From the 1930s to the 1950s American New Criticism was establishing its rapport with the work of T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards and W.K. Wimsatt. It has been started to confirm the major changes in English that focuses on the different approaches and theories associated with it. English literature has faced a new challenge to encompass the universal values and lead to the multidimensional perspectives. Marxism came and went, and feminism provided a major shot in the arm for literary studies and has remained a lasting influence. The decade of 1980 witnessed the arrival of multiculturalism, and other isms continued into the 1990s: post-structuralism, post-modern

ism, post-colonialism. (nd. The Academy)

Of late, in the 21st century, English has secured its position in the universities and proved worth in an environment that supports the very power of the literature in the phases of human life. English literature does matter in our life as our whole life is mirrored through literature. Students expecting to complete their undergrad opt for English literature and language as their major to open up the new gate of their life. It has been considered now an intellectually demanding subject as it gets related to other arena of knowledge. English literature does not mean only story or poem, it is closely related to the theories and different branches of studies.

Anthropology and Literature

Literature is not narrowed down within itself only as it extends its arena to different disciplines which makes the field of knowledge more enriched. Anthropology centers on the nature of 'man' that explores the cultural diversity that unites literature. The cultural anthropology is comparatively more associated with literature. It proves that culture is also within the play of relating anthropology and literature together. "... Culture was associated with art, literature and classical music. Anthropologists have always used the word 'culture' in a much broader sense to mean forms of life and of social expression" (Rivkin and Ryan, 1998, 1233). 'Displacement' of myth has the lead to make this connection firmed.

Anthropology is not only linked to literature, but also connected with literary theory. In different ways, it has spread its hand to literature. Structural anthropology inspired by Saussure focuses on the elements of a system combine together... difference and relation are the key notions here. Moreover, the combination of these elements give rise to opposites and contradictions which serve to give the social realism its dynamics (Mambrol,2018).

The important field of anthropology called literary anthropology actually covers two fields of study. The first is an exploration of the role that literature plays in social life and individual experience, in particular social, cultural, and historical settings. The question about what the term 'literature' is, arises in this study. Literary anthropology can be understood here as an exploration of different kinds of genre of expression, and how these genres can be said to have a historical background, a cultural evaluation, and a social values attached to them. "The anthropologist might examine literature as the oral recounting and exchange of myth among 20thcentury Amazonian hunter-gatherers, or the focus might be on the establishment of printed daily newspapers in Hungary and its links to the 19thcentury rise of Hungarian nationalism. Secondly, literary anthropology is a study of the nature of anthropology itself as a discipline" (Rapport, 2012).

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye (1971) has trusted literary criticism to find out the meaning of the literature. "Frye saw literature as a complication of relatively simple groups of formulae, which he termed 'myths' and 'archetypes'. In the book, myth is a term referring to specific aspects of narrative structure, such as plot or story, but in Frye's later work the term is also used to explore the cultural relevance of such stories or group of stories crucial for a given society. Myth is a structural principle in literary texts because literature is 'displaced' mythology."

Anthropology being a science to study human and its connection with other components like culture, it gets linked up with literature naturally, as literature displays various cultural appearances. Anthropology works on the structure of kinship as Levi-Strauss contends that primitive cultures maintain peace between social groups by using women as token of marriage to diminish the communal conflict which gets revealed in various forms in literature, for an instance, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Bel-Imperia is forced to marry Balthazar to abolish the conflict (Eagleton, 1996, 53).

Myths take an inseparable part in anthropology which is also 'displaced' in literary texts contended by Frye. "In the first place, mythology as a total structure, defining as it does a society's religious beliefs, historical traditions, and cosmological speculations- in short, the whole range of its verbal expressiveness is the matrix of literature, and major poetry keeps returning to it" (Das and Mohanty, 1985, 363). It is quite evident that literary theme in the literary text often coincide with myth. Frye argues that almost every literature has established its base from mythology as he asserts "because mythology and literature occupy the same verbal space, so to speak, the framework or context of every work of literature can be found in mythology" (Das and Mohanty, 1985, 366). Myths are utilized in a way in literature that refer to the 'allegories of science or religion or morality', for an instance, *The Pilgrim's Progress* allegorically represents the 'Christian myth of redemption' and *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller sounds McCarthyism to the audience.

Better understanding of culture is feasible through the proper knowledge of literature that helps to get hold of information regarding anthropology. Literature creates a mirror of sovereignty, culture, indignity sovereignty, cultural continuity, indignity, questions of post-colonialism, language politics and folklore, all oriented around Native American poetry, literature and films.

Anthropology is affected by different theories which rule the literature as the representation of culture is the study component of anthropologists. The stories, an indispensable part of literature, enrich the field of anthropology that helps the discipline to study the culture associated with the stories.

“One of our roles as anthropologists is to keep the stories entrusted to us, to think critically about not only what these stories reveal about a culture and a people, but also how to use those stories, relinquishing ownership while also providing an alternative stage for the telling.” (np. 2015)

Cultural anthropology studies the traditions, customs, and views of the society which are depicted in the form of fiction that display the culture in front of the audience. *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad is the mirror of the colonized society in which the culture of the colonizers and the colonized get flourished.

All of the work here, fictional and otherwise, is concerned with clarifying, exploding, magnifying, or subverting different kinds of truths. Anthropology has turned to literary conventions in order to further clarify the position of the author and to encourage multivocal authorship, surface vulnerability, reveal silences in standard discourses, and expose the seams in both anthropological and ethnographic practice.

Anthropology studies the relationship between language and culture as Levi Strauss began to see that culture, like language, is a system characterized by an internal order of interconnected parts that obey certain rules of operation (Rivkin & Ryan, 2004, 53). Anthropological linguists try to search into the connection between culture and language that both play as integral elements of literature. It shows how the language affect social life and it helps build a civilized structure where law, customs and tradition are maintained through using language. Anthropological linguists tend to conceive use of language through cultural and behavioral pattern of the community of the society. Anthropologists do not merely study human cultures, but similarly traffic in the intricacy and potency of language. Considering that ethnographies are one of the primary products of anthropological fieldwork, language is necessarily one of the central tools of anthropology's power.

The discipline of anthropology takes as its subject what Clifford Geertz (1980) refers to as the "great natural variation of cultural forms". Though *Heart of Darkness* starts with the journey from Europe to Africa, it actually never leaves the culture of Europe and underestimates the culture of Africa which is the source of their income.

“While *Heart of Darkness* relates the story of a journey hundreds of miles up the Congo river, in intellectual terms this famous novella never really leaves Europe, for an ethnocentric narrative, based on the concept of time, is established that correlates the physical journey away from the European center with a temporal

journey away from the European present."

Africa becomes an image of primitive people and resident for uncivilized people, living museum of the primal past—a European projection of a "prehistoric earth" inhabited by "prehistoric man".

The earth seemed unearthly. . . . and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend (Conrad, 1995, 37).

It is an attempt of Conrad to project Africa as a savage continent where there is still presence of uncivilized people. The culture, the key component of anthropology, is present in the novel as the dark culture and the anthropologists analyze this culture assuming it the uncivilized one.

The scope of the anthropological encounter in *Heart of Darkness* is significantly narrowed by the use of a temporal framework—what remains is the contact of Europe with its own distorted and "ugly" reflection. Marlow does not find anything distinctively African in Africa; instead, he finds a European construction of "truth stripped of its cloak of time" (Conrad, 1995, 97).

Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as "the other world," the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where a man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality. The book opens on the River Thames, tranquil, resting peacefully "at the decline of day after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks." But the actual story takes place on the River Congo, the very antithesis of the Thames. The River Congo is quite decidedly not a River Emeritus. It has rendered no service and enjoys no old-age pension. We are told that "going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginning of the world."

Heart of Darkness reveals the contemporary mode of colonization where the east is portrayed as the West sees it. The novella proves itself as an example of colonial power where the anthropological elements language and culture is present

ed as per the perceptions of the author. Racism is a part of the western culture which is reflected through literature. The cultural difference between west and east which creates a huge wall between 'the west' and 'the east'; that results in various controversies like racism, colonization, oppression etc. Through the western perspective, the east is presented as wild and savage. The culture of the east is not up to the west's one which is mentioned in the novella.

Psychology and Literature

Literature is deeply affected by theories of psychology both culturally and structurally as psychoanalysis studies human soul which prevails in the literature. "A picture of the human mind as a unified whole that can achieve full awareness of itself has been central to western thought since the seventeenth century. The 'cogito' or thinking self-defines our humanity and civility, our difference from animals chained to blind nature and uncontrollable instincts." (Rivkin & Ryan, 2004, 389). Literature again becomes the source of interpreting the psychological conditions of the human beings by the characters studied. It has added value to literature as the characters of different genres can be analyzed on the basis of different psychological issues. Psychoanalysis is a discipline that deals with the various phases of human mind that are reflected in the different genres of literature.

Sultana's Dream can be an excellent example to show the relation between literature and psychoanalysis in which it is evident that a character is presented in a way that a human mind can be analyzed through the performance of it. Dreams are the stories the brain tells during sleep – they're a collection of clips, images, feelings, and memories that involuntarily occur during the REM (Rapid Eye Movement) stage of slumber (n.d. Psychology Today).

Dreams, just like literature, do not usually, make explicit statements. Both tend to communicate obliquely or indirectly, avoiding direct or open statement, and representing meanings through concrete embodiment of time, place, or person (Barry, 2010, 94).

This story is about the dream of the protagonist Sultana that takes place in the female utopia Lady land where men are not in the form of main role and excluded from the community. In this fictional universe, women have accelerated the progress of humankind to a great extent, especially technologically. Without men, the women have already invented flying cars and have completely automated agriculture and other industries. They have also learned to utilize the weather according to their necessities.

The men cannot rule in this land rather they live under the control of female life. The women of the city continue in their paradise, observing that men were so

foolish to think that strength came from dominance. They observe that in nature, there are animals that have bigger brains and stronger bodies than men, and yet, the animals don't attempt to seize control. Without the competition that men unnecessarily introduced, society is much better.

The short story explains some of the other differences between Lady land and the real world. For instance, in Lady land, all religions have been reduced to truth and love. Since the women don't smoke nearly as many cigarettes, they managed to do in two hours what men took eight hours to accomplish. Men are better kept within the four walls.

The unconscious mind includes all of the things that are outside of our conscious awareness. These might include early childhood memories, secret desires and hidden drives. According to Freud, the unconscious contains things that may be unpleasant or even socially unacceptable. Because these things might create pain or conflict, they are buried in the unconscious.

While these thoughts, memories, and urges might be outside of our awareness, they continue to influence the way that we think, act and behave. In some cases, the things outside of our awareness can influence behavior in negative ways and lead to psychological distress (Cherry, 2018).

Sultana is a woman whose desires to be a successful entity get repressed in the chauvinistic society where a woman is supposed to live under the constraints imposed on them. In the contemporary time, woman was kept within the boundaries of house and education for them was not at all available that might help them to establish their own identity. Her desires to make contribution to science and the society and stop the wrong domination of men over women get reflected through her dreams.

Conclusion

Literature is not such a field which will not affect our practical life and will be only narrowed down to books. Different spheres of knowledge coalesce to start a new arena that is essential to lead a wise life. English with the help of other disciplines merge and direct the human beings to the knowledge that helps to mold the living standard and get the different perception regarding life. Culture, the integral part of anthropology and psyche, the soul of literature and psychoanalysis are reflected through the different characters of the literary texts. The reading of *Heart of Darkness* and Sultana's dream through the help of anthropology and Psychoanalysis helps the understanding of the culture of the particular area and the impacts of the culture on the mind and the state of the psyche of human beings the culture may be deemed as the important factor to shape the psychology of human beings.

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