A survey study on Psychoanalytic Study of Sybil by Flora Rheta Schreiber on the Light of Freudian theories

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ABSTRACT: Psychoanalytic theory is a continually evolving body of knowledge, but the so-called genetic or developmental point of view, which regards current functioning as a consequence of developmentally prior phases, has always been central. It is the name given by Hyman Spotnitz to describe a body of developments in the theory of technique in order to apply the psychoanalytic method to the treatment of certain disorders previously thought to be untreatable by that method. It has been found to be applicable to all types of emotional illness including neuroses, psychoses, borderline conditions, depression and character disorders. Sybil, a book about a woman suffering from multiple personality disorder published in 1973. It was known previously as cases of “split personality” that had haunted the imagination of Belle Epoque. The findings of modern psychoanalysis have contributed new insights into both the dynamics of emotional illnesses and the mechanisms through which the analytic process cures these conditions. In this study we survey the Study of Sybil by Flora Rheta Schreiber on the Light of Freudian theories

Key words: Psychoanalytic Study, Sybil, Flora Rheta Schreiber, Freudian theories, Modern psychoanalysis.

INTRODUCTION

Modern psychoanalysis rests upon the theoretical framework and clinical approach of Sigmund Freud, who defined psychoanalysis as any line of investigation that takes transference and resistance as the starting point of its work. These theories of the treatment of emotional illness include: 1) ways that each patient processes destructive impulsivity in the analytic setting; 2) transference repetition including not only experiences from the oedipal stage of development but also from the first two years of life as well as the prenatal period; 3) the systematic utilization of patient induced countertransference feelings and the effective use of emotional interchanges between analyst and patient and as an important clinical tool; and 4) use of variations in technique as necessary to aid in the understanding of patient dynamics and to resolve resistance to personality maturation.

We knew the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, without knowing if it corresponded to real problems, or if it was pure fiction. We also knew the case of "hysterical" by Jean Martin Charcot, the women in the throes of dramatic crises, sudden change in personality and tone of voice, which began to speak strange languages, shouting insanities, crying, laughing, and then waking up without remembering anything. It showed an obvious analogy with the stories of demonic possession. Then, the "big hysteria" had disappeared from the scene; psychiatrists rarely evoking only instances of "dissociation of personality." With Sybil, a new event appeared extraordinarily (Schreiber, 1973).

In 1971, the Center for Modern Psychoanalytic Studies was founded, establishing the first program of study in modern psychoanalysis. In 1972, the school received a provisional charter from the State of New York to grant a Certificate in Psychoanalysis as well as provide low-cost treatment. In 1978 the charter became an Absolute Charter, under which the school has been operating ever since. In 2006, with the passing of the mental health law licensing psychoanalysis as an independent mental health profession, CMPS was among the first psychoanalytic training institutes recognized by the State as a Licensure-Qualifying Institute. Over these decades, we have seen how analytic training and psychoanalytic treatment can be enlightening and transforming as we begin to experience life more fully and uncover our own specific and individual forms of creativity. For clinicians, CMPS opens new
doors in understanding the underpinnings of emotional disorders while offering a unique and comprehensive approach to psychoanalytic technique. During psychotherapy sessions conducted with the psychoanalyst Cornelia Wilbur, Sybil was transformed: sixteen characters, with very different names and memories, regularly arose during the hypnosis sessions. Some of these characters telling of childhood memories were about abuse, and sexual abuse. This exceptional case attracted the attention of the journalist Flora Rheta Schreiber, who decided to make the story. Thus, the book Sybil was a bestseller, followed by a film in 1976. However, the case soon became a success unexpected Sybil. Other similar cases then appeared everywhere in America. Some readers recognized themselves in Sybil. The dissociative identity disorder or multiple personality disorder is a dissociative disorder in which perception, memory and experience of identity are affected. It is considered the most severe form of dissociation. The patients have many different personalities that alternately take control of their behavior. Each alter may only dimly remember other alters actions. Related disorders are depression, anxiety, psychosomatic body complaints, self-injury, eating disorders, addictions and relationship problems. The cause is a post-traumatic stress disorder to be, particularly because of child abuse. According to studies, the incidence occurs in 0.5-1% of the population. In the professional world, however, debatable whether this is a genuine fault or an iatrogenic _ physician generated form_ or is a cultural phenomenon.

**Literature review**

Sybil Dorsette, the troubled art student at Columbia University is being treated by a psychiatrist Cornelia Wilbur by Dr. Atcheson, a colleague who believes that the young woman suffering from female hysteria, during the sessions, Sybil admits to not having full knowledge of what happens for large intervals of time. Dr. Wilbur helps her to remember childhood where she suffered physical abuse, psychological and sexual abuse by her mother Hattie, allowing the emergence of 16 different identities, which vary in age and psychological traits and living in her own life. Vicki, a French woman, is the dominant personality that explains to the doctor as she is able to drive the various parts that make up the psyche of Sybil (Dell, p. 7-37).

Colleagues accuse the doctor of having allowed the patient would create all other, and also the father of Sybil deny everything, while continuing to assert that his second wife was no more than a loving mother (Horevitz&Braun, p. 69-83). Hysteria is a term for a neurotic disorder in which egotism, egocentrism, and a need for recognition are important, but often the symbol of a bird of paradise has been associated, since they can be differentiated and thus does not have a uniform appearance (Schreiber, 1973).

Freud’s psychoanalytic theories deal with the three-part psyche (Barry 97). He claims that the human mind contains the ego, the super-ego and the id; three parts that struggle to catch our attention. Lacan, similarly, acknowledges a struggle in the mind between seeking pleasure and doing good (Lacan 23).

The character of Dorian Gray may be used as a prime example to explain the Freudian concepts of the ego, the super-ego and the id (Barry 97). In The Picture of Dorian Gray, we can follow the degradation of what at first appears to be a healthy psyche. During the course of the novel, the reader follows Dorian as the three parts of his mind melt into one. Basil Hallward’s painting does, quite literally, take the shape of, and show the face of, Dorian Gray’s id, while Dorian’s physical face only shows traces of what appears to be a perfect, ideal super-ego. Oscar Wilde’s novel makes a very interesting foundation for psychoanalytic literary criticism with its worship of aestheticism and hedonism and the effect it has on a man. I have chosen to apply the concepts of ‘evil’ and ‘good’ on Dorian Gray inaccordance with the commonly accepted distinctions given in for example the Bible.

Thereby, I will show in what ways Dorian Gray’s psyche is disturbed. Thus, I will in this essay analyses what I call ‘the evil’ in Oscar Wilde’s character Dorian Gray. I will investigate in what ways the psyche of Dorian Gray is disturbed and how it came to be that way. To do this, I will use Freud’s concepts of the ego, the super-ego and the id, which I will apply to the character to find out how the evil is manifested in him.

To achieve this, I will first present a short introduction of the author, aestheticism and the time and society the novel is written in. Secondly, I will make a short summary of the part of psychoanalysis I will apply here, namely the three levels of the psyche as presented by Freud. I will also draw parallels to Lacan’s similar theories on pleasure-seeking. Finally, I will conduct a close reading of Oscar Wilde’s novel in order to apply these theories to the character Dorian Gray.

The Picture of Dorian Gray was first published in 1890 in Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine, and through it Oscar Wilde set the norm for the new aestheticism of the 1890s (Ellman 305). Dorian Gray became an example of the pleasure-seeking hedonist – an art Wilde had already preached for fourteen years in articles such as “The True Function and Value of Criticism: With Some Remarks on the Importance of Doing Nothing: A Dialogue” and “The Decay of Lying” (Ellman 306). However, with The Picture of Dorian Gray, Wilde pointed out the tragedy of aestheticism.
Oscar Wilde's hedonistic character fails, and thereby shows the reader that it is impossible to lead a similar life. Taking Wilde's famous preface to the novel into consideration, The Picture of Dorian Gray turns out to be a very contradictory text. In the preface Wilde celebrates aestheticism with lines such as: "Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art" and "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all" (Wilde 5). The novel itself, however, appears to be a criticism of aestheticism and hedonism in practice – it is impossible to avoid seeing a moral message in it. Dorian Gray's fate can be seen as either making him into a martyr for aestheticism or turning him into a victim of the same (Sanders 484).

The inspiration to write The Picture of Dorian Gray allegedly came from several different sources, including Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Goethe's Faust (Ellman 311). Wilde said about the story that he "first conceived the idea of a young man selling his soul in exchange for eternal youth – an idea that is old in the history of literature, but which I have given new form" (Ellman 311).

When studying the Victorian Era, and the literature of the time, the name of Oscar Wilde occurs repeatedly. There is plenty of information to find about this man that confirms his fame in the Late Victorian society. He was very influential in the intellectual circle of the time – both as a private person and as an author. His texts, theories and words have outlasted the erosion of time and it survives into our days. In my reading and interpretation of The Picture of Dorian Gray, Richard Ellman's biography on Oscar Wilde has been a great inspiration. The biography reveals a lot, both about the author and about the writing of the novel. Regarding the time the novel was written in, I have found useful information in The Short Oxford History of English Literature as well as in various internet sources such as The Victorian Web and Wikipedia. Concerning my theoretical approach, I have used Beginning Theory – an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory by Peter Barry. For additional information I have read relevant parts of PsykoanalysensEtik by Jacques Lacan and PsykoanalysensTeknik by Sigmund Freud. Internet has proved a useful source on this subject as well through pages such as Wikipedia and kristisiegel.com.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the 1950s, the United States, a new literary genre, the multi-biography, inspired the modern movement of multiple personalities, often resulting in a film adaptation and on television. This is a book published in 1957, The Three Faces of Eve, which set the tone. Eve had according to her doctors, "only" three personalities. Another multi-biography, Sybil, inaugurated the movement in 1973. This book, which traces the treatment of a young woman from 1954 to 1965, was written by a journalist specializing in psychiatric publications and contributor to Science Digest, Flora Rheta Schreiber. She described the strange case of a young woman, Sybil, who had developed sixteen personalities to cope with a serious sexual abuse and severe abuse. Over a recovered memory therapy, Sybil found the "memories" of abuse, which she had suffered from her mother since the age of six months. In 2006, Robert Rieber, professor at Fordham University, showed that this story, he called hoax ("hoax"), was manufactured. He had the opportunity to review tape recordings of some of the 2000 sessions of Sybil's psychoanalysis (Dell, p. 7-37). A black box named Sybil is how Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen describes the case of psychiatric Sybil. From hysteria to depression the question existed that under what conditions these "diseases" spread, and what makes them exist. In his recent book published in May 2009, Borch-Jacobsen takes over the entire history of Sybil and shows that it was built from start to finish by the psychiatrist-psychoanalyst Cornelia Wilbur, Flora Rheta Schreiber journalist and author of the book. If Anna O, the patient of Breuer and Freud was, as the title of the book that Borch-Jacobsen has devoted a "hoax centennial," Sybil Wilbur was another hoax, for forty years. Sybil was a pseudonym to protect the anonymity of the patient, but also the account given by Wilbur by the channel Flora Schreiber. Schreiber claimed that anonymity is more the choice of Sybil herself. Schreiber and Wilbur died in 1988 and 1992, and left both directions to prevent any leakage. Wilbur stipulated that not everything related to the case of Sybil should be released until seven years after the death of Sybil. Since no one knew who she was, it could last indefinitely. In 1995, psychiatrist Herbert Spiegel, who saw Sybil in therapy in the early 60s during the absences of Wilbur, agreed to share his memories with Borch-Jacobsen. According to Spiegel, Sybil was a hysterical highly suggestible, and its personalities, far from being spontaneous, were the product of hypnotic treatment. Wilbur and Schreiber Spiegel refused to listen because, they said, if we are not talking about multiple personality, the story will not sell. For ethical reasons, Spiegel refused to disclose the identity of Sybil (Schreiber, 1973). Janet and Freud were both fascinated by the trauma, but they put forward quite different traumas. Pierre Janet (1859-1947), French psychologist who held the chair of Experimental Psychology and Comparative College de France between 1902 and 1934, identified the phenomenon of dissociation as an expression of youth trauma, ultimately creating problems or dissociations multiple personalities. Janet had a habit of treating his patients by "hypnosis", considering that the disease was not a physical illness, but a "psychic" disease. (Boon & Draijer, p. 458 – 462). The trauma was for him a moral trauma, that is to say, caused by a sad event or dramatic as the loss of a parent. Freud (1856-1939), founder of psychoanalysis, opposed the idea of dissociation of Janet for personal
reasons, rather than theoretical. Freud, Janet recital as a threat and a rival, put all his energy to discredit his theories. Hacking writes, "Janet fell victim to the high opinion of Freud himself, and he impressed upon the whole psychoanalytic movement. Janet was a scholar, Freud, by comparison was an entrepreneur who ruined the reputation of Janet" (Hacking, pp.72-73). Freud lives in the cause of hysteria repressed sexual trauma, and he claimed could cure in the exhuming of hypnosis, then by the laying on of hands, and finally by the method of free association. Janet severely criticized the importance given by Freud to sexuality, because a lot of trauma encountered in his own patients was not sexual (Schreiber, 1973).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Freud worked both on the past trauma as the primary cause. Freud explained the absence of memories by repression, unconscious process designed to protect the subject of psychic torment, due to trauma. The forgetting event affects both happy and unhappy events of our past, repression exerted on the traumatic events (Boon &Draijer, p. 458 – 462). If oblivion demonstrates the fallibility of memory and its fragility, leaving room for imagination to fill its gaps, the delivery is regarded by Freud as the power to keep intact the past events, and to recover the un-reacted through analysis. Indeed, repression, which in the seduction theory is exerted on the memories of traumatic events, operates the same way on the memories of oedipal conflicts (Horevitz&Braun, p. 69-83). According to Freud, the first object of love is the mother of a male, that is also in the formation of the Oedipus complex and, ultimately, for life. In the Electra situation, however, it is the father who becomes the object of love for the child.

CONCLUSION

The duality of "me" has been exploited by many literary fictions, such strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Stevenson (1886), The Double Dostoyevsky (1846), Confession of a sinner justified by James Hogg contemporary and friend of Stevenson, Don Juan and the twin of Otto Rank (1914). These stories have entrenched the idea of duality in Western consciousness. Carl Gustav Jung, too, described the human personality as divided into two archetypes, the "persona" or the social mask, and the "shadow", part dark and diabolical, that each of us carries within us. Freud, meanwhile, shared the human psyche in three instances historically and structurally different, the id, ego and superego (Horevitz&Braun, p. 69-83). The Freudian concepts unconscious and repression introduced a split in the psyche between the conscious and the unconscious infant present and ignores the conscious and the unconscious, which houses trauma. Freudianism assumes that each of us there is another, which only psychoanalysts have the power to reveal. Thus, psychoanalytic treatment produces dissociation, and the silence of the analyst's memories (Dell, p. 7-37).

Initial discussions about split personality are found in French psychiatrists and philosophers of the years between 1840 and 1880. The concept of dissociation as a "disintegration and fragmentation of consciousness" was coined by the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet (1859-1947).

Later, there are also reports on Sigmund Freud and others in Eugene Bleuler. However, they are extremely rare in the following decades. By 1980, only about 200 cases were recorded, some among the older psychiatric diagnosis "hysteria "and" traumatic neurosis. In 1973 the journalist Flora Rheta Schreiber authored the case report of a patient with 16 personalities; the first time the term "multiple personality" was used. To date, the concept of multiple personality disorder is highly controversial. Critics described the diagnosis as an invention of the therapists said they had "persuaded" to their patients the split personality or induced trance state during the suggestible to hypnosis (Hacking, pp.72-73). The only emerging during therapy are memories of traumatic events that are generated by the false treatment memories. The active questioning techniques call forth the expected symptoms themselves. The data on prevalence is doubtful and the diagnosis will be made in individual states often than the average (Schreiber, 1973).

REFERENCE

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