

Abstract

The thesis argues that there is need for a systematic methodology of the Lacanian psychoanalysis of texts. At present, the choice of analyzable texts is limited to the avowedly fictional works viz. poetry, fiction and plays (leaving out essays, autobiographies, letters, diaries etc.).

The thesis is an effort to devise such a methodology. The existing literature on Lacan lays too much emphasis on language – the unconscious is structured like language – while in Lacan, language is considered to be a material support to being. The real being (Unconscious with a capital 'U') is a conglomeration of psychosexual experiences, conceptualized by Freud in terms of the component drives of sexuality. Since the main discovery of psychoanalysis is the system Unconscious, a truly psychoanalytic investigation of literary texts should be able to address the 'Unconscious' of a text. This is called, in this thesis, the subjective meaning of the text or the subjective reality of its author.

To be able to find the drives, a psychoanalytic critic has to scan the 'acquired language' of the text first. This is called the 'subject matter' in this thesis. Then, because of the presence of certain misappropriations of available material in the text and its defiance of some conventional usages, a critic can locate a few 'natural symbols' in the text. Natural symbols are common-looking words in the text. The meaning the author has invested in these words is derived from the context and not from the dictionary. The knowledge of psychoanalytic findings guides the critic to discover their meanings.

It is theoretically asserted that this process of analysis will reveal that the subject matter of a text is merely a support or disguise, which actually exposes the author's drives.

As an illustration of the methodology, the text of *Marat/Sade* is first analyzed. An elaborate discussion of its subject matter or acquired language is given first. The analysis highlights how Peter Weiss, the author, has misappropriated the historical data and defied certain literary conventions. The words 'Sade', 'revolution', 'persecution', 'bath' (other than its figurative meanings) and 'play' are found to be the natural symbols in the play disguising some psychosexual components (drives). Their meanings are discussed.

In the final chapter, the illustration of the methodology continues, this time with interpretations. These interpretations are made possible due to psychoanalytic insight. It is concluded that the author (the Unconscious author or psyche which has been discovered through the analysis) does not believe in leadership as a goal or a career for life. Leadership is narcissistic, and pertains to the imaginary dimension of existence.

Keywords: Literary Texts, Critical theory, Psychoanalysis, Lacan, Peter Weiss, Marat/Sade