



Proceedings of the 1st English Education International Conference (EEIC) in conjunction with the 2nd Reciprocal Graduate Research Symposium (RGRS) of the Consortium of Asia-Pacific Education Universities (CAPEU) between Sultan Idris Education University and Syiah Kuala University

November 12-13, 2016, Banda Aceh, Indonesia



DESIRE IN THE *SILENT WIFE* BY A. S. A. HARRISON: A LACANIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

*This paper tries to portray and investigate the private problems faced by the main character in connection with her husband and her clients since performing consultation and forward. Jodi's great gift is her silence, and he has always loved this about her, but silence is also her weapon. The woman who refuses to object, who doesn't yell and scream, and there is strength in that, and power, and sadly her last. In this contemporary psychoanalysis, I not only discuss the desire to preserve but also the concentrate on the foundation of classical psychoanalysis. So, I would reflect on qualitative descriptive method and relate it to psychoanalysis in general, especially Lacanian psychoanalysis. The result is *The Silent Wife* has been described as "a gripping story of deception." But both parties start out knowing exactly what's going on, and the identity of the true clueless victim is far from predictable. It is an impressive debut from a talented new voice.*

Keywords: *Desire, silent, psychology.*

INTRODUCTION

Harrison's work entitled *The Silent Wife* has been one of the preferred texts of Psychoanalytic literary criticism. This may be ascribed to the fact that the text modern combination of gender existence among man and woman, and accessible to psychoanalytic interpretation. Jodi Brett is beautiful, rich and intelligent. As a psychotherapist, she is also, as A.S.A Harrison's debut opens, "deeply unaware that her life is now peaking. That a few short months are all, it will take to make a killer of her". Becoming her partner for 20 years, Todd Gilbert, never a faithful man, has fallen for someone else and is leaving her.

Lacanian psychoanalysis is specifically well suited for this purpose, since it acknowledges the important role of that language plays in the construction of self-perception of the speaking subject (Lacan, 1988, p. 80). After the subject initiation into the order of language (the symbolic) it is forced to redefine restructure its notion of the self with every encounter with language (Lacan, 1988, p. 88). And according to Lacan, the unconscious is not only structure like language, it is in effect created by language, since it is with the entry into the symbolic that the subject become aware of the prohibition and restriction of the Father, which originates the need for repression and create the unconscious (Wright, 1984, p. 109).

From these preliminary comments the main determinant which influence the way in which man and woman are conceptualized in *The Silent Wife* can be assumed. In this novel I want to acknowledge how large the concept desire.

Starting off with the mirror stage in psychoanalytic theory is purposeful, because the mirror stage is explored extensively within Lacan's theory and in the field of psychology. He discusses mirror

stage at great length in his paper, "the mirror stage as formative of the function of I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience," (Lacan, 2001, p. 503). Lacan tends to associate (albeit not exclusively) the Imaginary with the restricted spheres of consciousness and self-awareness.

Furthermore, the study of literary psychology is an interdisciplinary study of pre-existing but still underdeveloped due to lack of reference and theories related to psychology (Ratna, 2011, p. 14). As an interdisciplinary, literary psychology is one way to reduce stagnation, as it is done in microscopic readings by structural group. Psychological approach also needs to be developed in order to reject the notion that the creative process is influenced by symptoms of psychological aberration; the creative process is categorized as being in the state of trance (Wellek & Warren, 1962, p. 81). However, to analyze this literary work I use the fundamental concepts of Lacan, such as Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real in relation to desire.

From Imaginary to Symbolic

The Imaginary level is the stage where the self-began to be formed. That she is making herself visible in the mirror and in the end all that absorbed is imaging. In conjunction with the symbolic level, solid foundation prepare the image through the symbolic order to work in a person. The image will not be imaged without structuration by the symbolic world in it.

If the relationship is working at the signifying level, the symbolic order emerges in paradigmatic relation, while the image on the order of an imaginary world is called the syntagmatic relations. The syntagmatic relationship is understood as the sign relations with other signs. In this syntagmatic relations are invited to imagine the future or predict what will happen later. The syntagmatic consciousness aims to create a structure by combining existing elements.

Therefore, the identification of individuals as otherness is not enough only through relationships, but must be accompanied by syntagmatic relations. Thus, the symbolic identification with the main signifier goes hand in hand and works together with the imaginary identification. Such as the relationship between Jodi and Todd since twenty years ago before falling with Natasha, as stated in the following quotation:

"It's still a shock to look at herself in the mirror. She has no memory of wielding the shears and no sense of the thought that may have been going through her head". (p. 317)

Based on the above quote that Jodi has a very strong desire to be with Todd, but he passed away after getting married with Natasha. So, when she looks in the mirror, the reflection of her image and her thought are with Todd, this type of imaginary makes her being shock and difficult for her to release.

In short, there is still mystery to be plumbed about how literature is born, how it works, and how we react to it. It is with this matter that the psychological critic concerns himself. But psychological criticism no needs only being genetic or explanatory, limiting itself to sources and processes. By helping us to perceive meaning where seemingly existed before, it can also be evaluative. The critic that brings to his craft deep learning and skill both in psychology and literature can teach us much we are eager to know (Grebstein, 1968, p. 246).

The Symbolic and Desire

In the symbolic level, the main signifier is a signifier of identity carrier. Identification of subjects at the primary signifier of authority arouse desire into an object "desirable" the main signifier. Men, Women, Students, Faculty, Property, Public, Labor, Employer, Gentile, Muslim, and so are some of the main signifiers.

Identification of subjects at the primary signifiers led him to become otherness. Jodi, for example, will attempt to release all the things that would make her a female. She will react when there are others trying to destroy or eliminate her from her intimate friend. It is so important that she spawned an existential sense. Sense of identity can be formed symbolically and make her to find out about Natasha deeply. It occurs because her desire for other symbolic requires the desire to identify herself with others.

Signifying the work on the authority of the symbolic order is the main signifier for paradigmatic relations. This relationship is the sign for external relations with other signs. Signs that could relate

paradigmatic are signs of one class or one system. The word "woman" has a relationship paradigmatic example with the word "beautiful", "gentle", and "feminine". Such as in the following:

As a force in his life Jodi is polished, a virtuoso who works on him artfully, whereas Natasha plug directly into his primitive brain. If Jodi is up, Natasha is down. If Jodi is a gentle lift, Natasha is a ten story fall. (p. 61)

This paradigmatic relationship is brought to the mental association called metaphoric relationship. The metaphoric relationship arises because of the presence of the forces of repression from a signifier that is replaced with a new signifier, such as the replacement of Natasha with Jodi for Todd.

While associative imagination arising from the change of the position of the signifier and encourage subjects to the position and identify traits, character, status, and images are connected to one or more primary signifier replacement constituted ego ideal. This imagination can be seen by both Todd and Jodi, either while they are together or while they a part.

The Husband

As a husband, Todd always follows Natasha order to accompany her whenever she goes around into the city. Almost every day Todd is absent from work in the office just to accompany Natasha, sometimes they visit gynecologist, look for a rental home or prepare for the baby's needs. Evenly, Natasha asks him to immediately seek the proper shelter. As Todd wife, Natasha feels very jealous when Todd mentions Jodi's name. She wants Todd can forget her. For Todd, it is very difficult to do so because he has been together for twenty years. Comparing to Natasha, it is very much different from Jodi, because she is too young, lack of understanding, impatient, quick-tempered, stubborn and willful like her father.

The desire to have is the desire to own other (materials, objects, people, power, position) as a way to satisfy them. It takes the form on how to obtain pleasure as opposed to self and others - anaclitic desire. The desire to have a foundation of postmodern society is institutionalized through the system of global capitalism. In it, people are socially constructed in order to obtain a series of objects that are actually essentially they do not need. Here, global capitalism changes, .demand to become a necessity (need).

The Father

The father's story tells how the role and the story of Natasha's father and his relationship with Todd because he never likes the man, though now he has impregnated his daughter. Feeling malice because he still makes an impression in his hearts where the old Todd manages to marry his fifteen years daughter. However, he knew that Todd had a relationship with Jodi nearly twenty years. The incident occurred because he knew Jodi was also Todd's close friend, so that was why he told Jodi. The story is recounted and imagined backward about Todd hatred towards his father who had died many years ago. Hatred and longing are still shrouded in his hearts and minds that make him more stress as if the father there beside him definitely be punched, until blood trickled past his nose due to unthinkable as it is said:

...the boy, now a man was overcome with grief despising how it all lay bare between them, how there was no father and no more son just two adult men in hateful and impoverished proximity. (p. 108)

The above statement is not only trying to explore his imaginary and reflection of his childhood but also his future orientation through the word "adults". It means that he feels sorry becoming an adult because the problem that he faces concerning on his desire which is not achieved as it is hoped. Then, he would like to return to his childhood times, and this is also the desire that he needs to have, the demands he wants to get but failed.

Jodi and Todd Gilbert

Jodi as a psychologist suffered a mental collapse since her boyfriend, who was always with her previously, must marry another woman who was far younger than her. The impact of this marriage made Jodi quietly without protesting openly. Jodi's silence even produced negative consequences against her former boyfriend, Todd. The incident made her shocking twice, first Todd had been taken by another woman, and second Todd was killed by the woman's father only because he did not agree to marry his daughter. Day-to-day life of Jodi was very understated because since childhood, she had felt the happiness although there was little disturbance between the father and mother, and the disorder had no effect at all on it, so it could be clearly seen what had happened to her since these incidents as stated below:

She is deeply unaware that her life is now peaking, that her youthful is resilience—which her twenty years marriage to Todd Gilbert has been slowly eroding—its approaching a final stage of disintegration, that her notion about who she is and how she ought to conduct herself are far less stable than she supposes, given that a few short months are all it will take to make a killer out of her. (p. 4)

Losing someone is not something to be desired, especially the lost a loved one, a place to share affection, pain and happiness. Death is the ending of the stage of human life. Everyone's living will experience this death. Uncertainty about death itself creates fear in human beings, either man or woman. Likewise with the death of a family member or close friend, will cause grief for those left behind.

Jodi and Natasha

Jodi Brett is the woman who is very close to Todd. One thing almost never forgets about him is home, home is very important for him, and it is the capable counterpoint provides affairs and glamor. Affair for them is a secret, but no complications were prolonged. Todd really has no intention at all to marry Natasha, because she manages to seduce him.

Natasha is a kid who is less popular. And after his mother had died, she became a little wild. Her performance often wears black lipstick and spiky hair, a potbelly and chewed finger nails. It is hard to imagine suddenly she is being an attractive girl and Todd carries away with her virginity, a girl half his age. Natasha is also interested in him. Men are like that, they crave the reassurance. Natasha is certainly not pushy. Not anyone to be reckoned with. Everyone knows the prediction of the very good future is their past behavior. The result of all is the marriage between Todd and Natasha as expressed in the following:

It's a good thing that she, at least, is stable, mature, and loyal, capable of holding a marriage together. (p. 112)

For Jodi, this is not a problem because she is capable to cope with what had happened she does it willingly, gladly, pleased to be the fully functional member of the union, the one with the clean bill of mental health, the one who enjoyed the happy childhood. Jodi did her early life in a beautiful life, and her childhood was the happiest childhood. But his parents' household made herself stunned by her father and mother who often did fighting with each other. The point is the fighting of his parents and the matter of adults so that no negative impact on her and her family. It is rather difficult to improve the lives of this middleclass family solidly and worthily through hard working because they have the power and appropriate education.

Jodi and Her Brother

Another way to resolve this problem for Jodi is manifested through her dreams and through the dream she tries to reflect back the origins of her family, her parents, her brothers Darrell and Ryan. As a sister she is three years older than Ryan, does not ever remember when her brother comes in the family and makes her astonished when looking at his face. Indeed, the life of their childhood is really different. Jodi loves his brother even though they rarely meet each other due to Ryan adventures to other countries such as India; South East Asia in general, also lives in Kuala Lumpur,

including working as a restaurant waitress in Canada. So, seeing backward of nostalgia they embody by using telephone only. Indeed, Ryan wants to see her sister, but because of overcrowding causes, they never meet each other. Although from a distance, her sister always seeks to protect the beloved brothers, and this is one of the great desires that always come to her mind.

“Ryan, The way he was, it was almost like he didn’t belong to us. Sometimes they would call him their little foundling. My parents did. They called him that when he was acting up”. (p. 169)

Likewise, the longing for her brother called Darrell; the man who follows the footsteps of his father to continue his education up to PhD level in the field of pharmacy in Minneapolis. After getting his PhD, he was back to his hometown and married his former senior high school girlfriend. The girl's father is expecting him to be able to manage his pharmacies as well as becoming the director while teaching at the Faculty of Health in Canada. Darrell is six years older than Jodi; this brother is intelligent, good, obedient and funny. He's an awful to teach her sister Jodi related with subjects such as homework.

Todd and Killing

The death of Todd was very surprising for Jodi because at that time she was abroad following the psychology conference at a five-star hotel. But the signs of the disaster began to permeate her thoughts as Jodi was lying down in bed and the phone rang even without appointed by her. Then, she fell asleep and dreamed that someone was calling her, but she ignored because it was the only dream. The next day, when the conference committee served for breakfast, Jodi was called and said there was unidentified person called her. Actually, the problem was Todd had died and being shot by someone. This killing was not the desires of Jodi, Natasha or Todd, but the desire of Dean himself.

The impact of his death made Jodi becoming one of the suspects and considered the very closest to him. But Jodi remained calm facing interview conducted by police who went to her home twice to three times. Apparently based on the observation, the murder was the father of Natasha herself who paid someone to kill Todd because Dean was not willing to have his daughter marry to Todd, though she was going to give a birth to Todd’s son.

CONCLUSION

Reading Harrison’s *The Silent Wife* within a psychoanalytic paradigm, as this essay has done, opens up possibilities for an interpretation which is accustomed to contemporary issue, those related to woman and power by silent. Utilizing notions derives largely from Lacanian psychoanalysis as a conceptual framework for analyzing novel, it becomes apparent how theoretical and literary texts may interact to produce readings which not only elaborate the textual dynamics of the literary text, but also manage to position it in the broader context of current gender and literary issues.

One of the central explorations of *The Silent Wife* is the tension between the orders of imaginary and the symbolic, the woman and the man. In this exploration issues of existent ion of “self”, desire and silent are two of crucial importance, as is particularly evident in the development of the character of Jodi. Essentially, the tension is between desire for the retrieval of the symbolic unity (between Todd and Jodi), and the prohibition which the symbolic Father of Natasha places on his desire against Todd, and not repeated.

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