Heathcliff, the 19th century Othello

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Abstract: Psychoanalysis studies people's feelings and characteristics during childhood to discover their problems and solutions. Sigmund Freud is a pioneer in psychoanalysis who believes every single action of human roots in his/her past. Othello in Othello by William Shakespeare and Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë are two characters that may appear irrelevant to each other on surface but deep down they share one childhood trauma which is being an outsider. The chief purpose of this article is to examine the effect of childhood trauma on self-destruction procedure in these two characters.
Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, Othello, Heathcliff, outsider

INTRODUCTION

Human is a creature of several dimensions. There are those who grasp the opportunities and gain success and on the other hand there are those who wreck their life by their own flaws. Sigmund Freud as a neurologist, who became known as the founding father of psychoanalysis, proves that any human reaction originates from his/her deep desires and unconscious needs. Shakespeare's tragic hero, Othello, was a gifted man who in spite of the adversities in his life, he accomplished several goals in his life, from victory in several combats to a glorious marriage. Despite all these great achievements, the fear of remaining an outsider ruined Othello's destiny [1-2]. The story of fate does not finish in classic time. The 19th century novel character, Heathcliff, is condemned to the same fate. These characters go through self-destruction procedure because of their uniqueness. Considering the psychological impacts on human behavior, this article aims to show the similarity between Othello and Heathcliff in terms of being outsiders.

DISCUSSION

In recent centuries, psychoanalysis has become a major device to understand and interpret human behaviour[3-9]. Sigmund Freud explained personality as the result of unconscious and irrational desires, repressed memories or wishes and conflict. The unconscious and deep desires are the motivations for any human actions. Freud's attempt to find reasons and meanings in human behavior leads to the studies of literary works. (Leitch)In Freudian method characters are considered as living people whereas in other's point of view such as Jacques Lacan literature is seen as an indication of the write. Freud proved the existence of unconscious through several experiments claiming that dreams are a reflection of human's deep desires that may come true in real life. According to his achievement, one can conclude that human's struggles in real life represent their most secret wishes and hopes.

The fear of being an outsider or to be left alone is not only the issue of literature. An outsider appears as a person who is outside the society where he lives in because of two main reasons: first, s/he considers her/himself in upper status and second, s/he feels inferior among others. Human is a social creature by nature and in cases of solitude s/he might express her/himself grotesquely. In our today society there are people who strive to be accepted in a certain community. They might join different parties or various clubs to find people with same interests in order to make them attached to others. The problem starts when the club, society or any other community let go of one. As the one cannot meet her/his needs and fulfill their god given desires, s/he starts taking revenge from the world in different ways such as self-destruction.

Othello, the play's protagonist is a Christian Moor and general of the armies of Venice. Othello is the story of being and becoming as the fate wants him to be in minority whereas he struggles to join the majority. Shakespeare introduces Othello in a way to be totally distinctive by others. In Elizabethan drama the black color of complexion was designated to show villain characters while Shakespeare does not follow the

same routine. Othello is a strong figure, respected by all those around him but because of his age and race there are some people who enjoy his fall. Iago and Roderigo are the characters who do not accept Othello in their community and plan his downfall. During the play they regard Othello as "the Moor" (I.i. 7), "the thick-lips" (I.i.7), "an old black ram" (I.i.9), and "a Barbary horse" (I.i.10) which explains that in spite of Othello's efforts to be accepted as one of them and his power, they do not consider Othello as one of themselves.

Who can believe a man like Othello who is on top of power and possesses the most stunning girl's love in his area would ruin his life by his own will; not to accuse Othello himself, his cunning enemies as Iago and Roderigo masterfully detected his deep fear and throw him in his worst dream which was isolation. As the plot goes on and Iago's plan works out, Othello's feeling of an outsider increases and his desires are no longer fulfilled; therefore, he kills his beloved and loses whatever he had fought for. Feeling betrayed by his closest people around him made him realize that no matter how much to try, and outsider remains an outsider forever.

Heathcliff, the orphan who is brought to live with the Earnshaw family is the 19th century outsider. The beginning of the novel, Bronte portrays Heathcliff as an innocent, empathetic character. Hence, his poor past with nobody to care for him, past of solitude and sorrow, provokes the reader's sympathy with him which is reinforced by the cold welcome and severe bothering he receives from several of his new family members. Thus, the innocent character of Bronte's novel changes into a self-destructive villain. The readers might love him, not because of virtue, but out of pity. The way he is treated by Hindley and the unreasonable attention he receives from Catherine who left him alone, justify his misbehavior. Bronte describes Heathcliff with bewildering mixture of love and hatred, no matter what cruel things Heathcliff operate within the novel, the readers still consider him as a romantic character.

Although, Heathcliff speeches manifest his nature which is violent, harsh and cruel, these features are soften when he weeps for Catherine's ghost to stay. Heathcliff is just a human being, rejected by society, a man devoured by the fear of being an outsider that stops himself from opening his heart to love. He loves Catherine not for her, but for the attention that she offered when he came as an outsider. Heathcliff as Othello in 19th century takes revenge of his fate by his brutal speeches and irrational actions. As Freud explained, for Heathcliff, his need of attention, love, belonging and care is left unreached which ends in social misbehavior. Heathcliff and Othello are both the victims of societies which abandoned them and they had to face their misery.

CONCLUSION

Considering the everyday growth of mental clinics and psychological therapies, today no one can deny the power of psychology on human behavior. Taking into account the influential rule of psychology one is able to identify her/his weaknesses and strength to develop her/his personality to a better human who would not suffer from self-destruction. Othello and Heathcliff are just examples of ourselves or people around us; if they were given enough attention and care who would not anticipated their prosperous future?! In other words one can claim that if you invest your efforts on today psychological matters you can defiantly expect healthy and flourishing future. Sigmond Freud's theories are still fresh for new discoveries and studies to guarantee better future with better generations.

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