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Stephen King's "Carrie": A Psychoanalytic Analysis

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1. Abstract

Without Stephen King's contributions, current horror writing is deemed insufficient and crippled. Stephen King is recognized with reinventing horror literature. Stephen Lord is known as the "King of Horror." The proposed study seeks to investigate Stephen King's novel Carrie via a psychoanalytic perspective. This work explores themes such as supernatural powers, revenge, guilt, blame, sexuality, and sin. Carrie is a Gothic novella that explores themes such as ostracism and revenge. An effort is being made to study the characters' themes and inner psyches. A series of previous traumatic events had a psychological impact on Carrie, eventually transforming her into a heinous revenge figure. Furthermore, Carrie is expected to be studied as suppressing her worries using Freudian psychology. Psychoanalysis is a contemporary theory commonly employed in English literature. It is essentially an area in which the human psyche is thoroughly read, probed, analyzed, and remarked upon. Literature examines the individual as the center of the forces that surround him, where he is dominated by both internal and exterior influences. Stephen King has produced one of the most significant contributions to Gothic fiction. In his novels, he is noted for incorporating horror, mystery, suspense, romance, supernatural, and other themes. The current study paper is reported to be focused on Carrie White's personality and the events bringing her to the downfall at the end of the novel.

Keywords: psychoanalytic, horror literature, psyche, mystery, Gothic fiction, traumatic events

2. Introduction

Carrie is a book in the Gothic genre. Stephen King's debut novel was released on April 15, 1974. The story is set in 1979 and centers around Carrie White, a friendless, harassed high school girl from an oppressive religious family. Carrie had telekinetic talents when she was three years old. When she had her first menstrual period, her peers mocked and ridiculed her at school. Carrie experienced severe psychological distress as a result of this encounter. She blamed this on her religious zealot mother, Margaret. As it is the mother's responsibility to teach her child about these intimate matters. Carrie suffered greatly as a result, and eventually the entire town was affected by her anguish, which was extremely violent and devastating. In the narrative, she turns into a terrifying character that murders people and causes problems for everyone. Carrie is examined from a variety of angles by numerous academicians, researchers, and scholars worldwide. This analysis of Carrie is meant to be done via the prism of psychoanalysis.

3. Psychoanalysis

"Psychoanalysis is learned, first of all, from a study of one's self, through the study of one's personality" – (Freud) 1920

According to McLeod (2014), "psychoanalysis could be a style of medical aid that aims to unleash repressed or pent-up emotions and recollections to guide the patient to catharsis, or healing." Moving people from the unconscious or subconscious level to the conscious is the primary objective of psychoanalysis. Reprimanding someone about the numerous questions pertaining to psychological problems and exploring the intricacies that exist beyond the straightforward apparent surface accomplishes the purpose. The experience of the twentieth century is characterized by the global war, which is another significant aspect. As everyone is aware, there have been numerous significant, massive, and disastrous wars this century, including the Cold War, the First and Second World Wars, and other post-Cold War conflicts. The way the war was waged changed significantly as a result of scientific and technological advancements made during the conflict. In the conflict, they employed a variety of recently developed tanks, aircraft, and chemical weapons as well as altered tactics and strategy. Individuals experienced psychological problems commensurate with immense devastation and ruin. Because of this, authors of this age focused mostly on this problem as the central theme of their works of literature. It is well knowledge that the field of psychoanalysis had a significant influence on literature and society in the 20th century. It is valuable to concentrate on the inception and progression of psychoanalysis and its theories. Sigmund Freud, an Austrian psychiatrist and neurologist, coined the term "psychoanalysis" in French in 1896 for the first time in his book The Interpretation of Dreams. The term psychoanalysis refers to the investigation of the psyche and is a collection of theories and therapeutic approaches that examine the unconscious mind and are used to treat mental illnesses.

Freud was born in the Moravian town of Freiberg, Austria, on May 6, 1856. However, once his family moved to Vienna when he was four years old, he spent his early years and adulthood there. He enrolled in

medical school, where he became a specialist in neurology and graduated in 1881. Psychoanalysis was founded by Sigmund Freud. He studied and analyzed his patients' behavior using theory and therapeutic approaches. He created this system in his medical clinic at first, and it eventually became well-known and was acknowledged as a discipline. Psychoanalysis's fundamental premise is that emotional and psychological issues, such anxiety and depression, frequently stem from tensions between the aware and unconscious minds. The ego, super ego, and id are the three divisions of the mind made by Sigmund Freud. The highly active portion of the mind that controls desires, anger, pleasure, and subconscious memories is called the id. The superego is the moral authority that makes moral decisions regarding the demands of the id, whereas the ego is the realistic, logical aspect of the self. As is well known, people who experience stress, worry, rage, terror, or trauma may develop severe emotions and aberrant psyches. In essence, it is the part of our minds that is unconscious, where our suppressed urges, dark secrets, childhood memories and other related things.

Psychoanalysis indicates that individuals may undergo catharsis, which is the emotional purification or cleaning process. Those who have been oppressed, distressed, and victims of identity are relieved from their psychological suffering when they are caught between two choices. Additionally, the existential crisis is carefully examined and explored. Through the interpretation of literary texts, psychoanalysis in literature can be observed. Through the plot, we are able to read and comprehend the author's unconscious wishes and concerns.

American horror, supernatural, fantasy, science fiction, and criminal fiction writer Stephen Edwin King was born on September 21, 1947. King has almost 200 short stories and 63 books published. Richard Bachman is the pen name under which seven of his novels have been published. Moreover, he is the author of five nonfiction publications. King is well-known for being the "King of Horror." 1974 saw the release of King's first book, Carrie. In essence, psychoanalysis examines the characters' neurosis and insanity. Carrie White, the protagonist of this book Carrie, appears to be trapped in her delusion. The piece is Gothic in style and has scary elements. It is implied that Carrie is the victim of society and her family. . She is a teenage girl who experiences terrible and cruel treatment from her mother, who is a devout person. When Carrie gets her first menstrual cycle later in school, her peers mercilessly abuse her. She becomes a vengeful girl as a result of this tragedy because she initially accuses her mother of failing to teach her about it. When Carrie was three years old, she also possessed telekinetic abilities. To exact retribution, or to put it another way, to quell the fear she harbors for her classmates, she eventually resorts to violent and destructive behavior. The book's main themes are violence, abuse, bullying, sin, death, and poor communication.

The novel is delivered in epistolary form for the most of its length. Because it originates from her mother Margaret at home, Carrie's victimization is unique from others'. Carrie is uncaring because Margaret keeps her away from the outside world and its goings-on. Since she was a little child, Carrie's mother has mostly influenced and passed on her mentality. Readers are drawn to Margaret's mental state earlier than any other character in the book. Carrie is an emotionless girl due to her extreme religious beliefs and her lack of sense of reason. Her mother was responsible for Carrie's entire upbringing. Carrie holds her mother accountable for

everything that occurs at school, but her mother (62–66) links sin (e.g., eating from the tree of knowledge) with blood.

The tragedy in the novel stems from Carrie's bullying at her school. Carrie's attempts to recover from the abuse and harassment she endured at school are unsuccessful. About taking revenge, her mental state is unstable. She murders her mother and devastates the entire community. Carrie experiences a sense of exclusion and ostracization throughout her life. She doesn't comprehend the brutality of civilization.

4. Freudian Psychology

Psychoanalysis is essentially the study of the psyche. It is essentially a method of arriving at a conclusion, such as through examining the thoughts and actions of an individual. Prior to delving into the explanation of anxiety and repression, it is necessary to have a fundamental understanding of Freudian psychology. The ego, superego, and id are the three divisions of the mind made by Sigmund Freud. When all three of these systems function together, an individual is considered to be able to live a normal life in harmony with their surroundings. However, if even one of the aforementioned systems isn't meeting the individual's needs and actions, they are considered to be acting in a chaotic way, which leads to abnormal behavior. A succinct description of the three is given below separately.

4.1. Id

The first and supposedly more active component is the id, according to theory. Satisfying one's basic needs and desires—such as hunger, thirst, sex, and pleasure—is the role of the Id. Logic and reason are not necessary for id to function. Accordingly, when someone's basic needs are not met, their behavior creates a tense and frustrating environment. Doing what Freud refers to as "the primary process" will be the outcome of the conflict. According to theory, this first step creates a memory representation of the object that is required to ease tension. Due to the initial process' failure, we must now use the secondary process to ensure the basic needs and desires. This secondary process belongs to the Ego.

4.2. Ego

Because the Id operates only on the basis of pleasure, it disregards logic and reason. The Ego is claimed to be a component of the process via which a person accepts social duties, while the Id is said to be unable to comprehend social rules. Ego is the system of exchanges that exists between a person and the outside world. The Id is considered the pleasure principle, whereas the ego is considered the reality principle. This principle of reality refers to Freud as the Secondary Principle. The problem-solving or thought process is another name for this secondary step.

4.3. Super Ego

Regarding right and wrong, this aspect or process first emerges in the family and in society. Children learn how to make decisions about what is right and wrong from their families and the wider community. There is another name for this process: the moral process. Anybody in a position of control over an individual, such as clergy,

teachers, or police officers, develops the superego. The Superego development of an individual is primarily influenced by religious institutions. One of the first horror books that use a novel kind of terror is Stephen King's Carrie. The characters' psychological states are closely linked to Stephen King's horror formula. Given that Freud's theory of anxiety and repression can provide light on the events that lead to certain psychological phenomena in the book, it makes sense to use it specifically to explore the psychological states of the characters in Carrie.

Carrie's id was the source of her worry and vengeful attitude, while her ego and superego are incapable of helping her find a solution to her concern. Carrie uses her telekinetic abilities to satiate her irrationality. Even Carrie experiences the moral unease that results from seeing the telekinetic abilities. What she and the other characters consider normal is defied when objects are moved solely by mental strength. Every character that comes into contact with the monster in the novel experiences terror, which puts their moral principles to the test. Carrie combats the threat posed by consciousness by using repression as a weapon. It's horrifying to think of the horrific circumstances that made Carrie suppress her memories of her telekinetic abilities. When Carrie White was three years old, it all began. Since she was little, Carrie's mother has punished and chastised her. When Margaret White, her mother, yelled at Carrie, strange things began to happen to her property and stones began to fall from the sky. In order to keep Margaret out of trouble, Carrie suppressed this power. This suppression persisted till she overcame it throughout her life. Carrie has her first menstrual cycle in her classroom at that point. Carrie was able to move the things, therefore the bullying and taunting by her classmates began a process of her powers emerging with her mind.

In essence, it was the turning point that allowed Carrie to once again access her suppressed desires that had been lodged in her ego. Carrie's personality is significantly shaped and framed by her repression and anxiety. Carrie may have been examined via a variety of other perspectives, but an attempt was made to examine Carrie via the prism of psychoanalysis.

One of the best themes in the book is Carrie, which touches on a lot of great topics like isolation, sex, violence, blood, supernatural, sin, and guilt. However, ostracization and vengeance are the two main motifs that run through the entire narrative. The main focus of the novel's Ostracization themes is Carrie's exclusion from society because she defies social conventions. It is stated that Carrie's life was made more difficult by Margaret White's rejection. She never seemed to be appreciating or taking advantage of society standards or freedoms. The main plot point of the book is how her first period in the shower causes her to be more rejected and showered with tampons. As the only person in the book to exhibit true regret for Carrie, Sue sets up a date with her fiancé, Tommy, for the spring ball. According to rumors, Chris wants to get even with Carrie, which is why during the spring ball, Pig Blood is thrown on her. When Carrie forces herself through multiple adversities at different levels of her life, the idea of vengeance is evident. Even without her superpowers, she survives for years. However, Carrie cracks and destroys the city after being invited to a prom and getting sprayed with pig blood. When Carrie was a child, this psychological problem began with her family and progressed to the school.

Despite having telekinetic abilities, Carrie never used them until she began to feel alienated and estranged. At that point, she decided to use her skills, and her desire for vengeance was satisfied.

5. Conclusion

The research paper focuses on Carrie's character and the mistreatment she experienced at home and at school. There is a detailed discussion of the causes of her bad behavior and disordered personality. Because of its graphic themes of blood, death, devastation, and retaliation, Carrie is also viewed as an unrealistic source of entertainment. Following a psychological examination of King's Carrie, a reading and analysis of the main character's psychosis is conducted. Many have believed that Carrie was not entirely to blame for her misdeeds because of the situations that surround her, which give the character in the book such a horrific and violent appearance. The novel is analyzed using Freudian psychology and horror narrative formulas. Carrie's psychological affects are triggered by the novel's normalcy characteristics and her unstable interaction with them. Carrie is not expected to behave in a typical manner as dictated by society. She is meant to develop a mentality in which she doesn't feel liked and sympathized by others as a result of being shunned by society. Second, the way her peers treat her at school serves as a turning point in the narrative and introduces the terror. Because of the bloodshed and devastation that the school tragedy brought to the town as a whole, Carrie refrained from unleashing her telekinetic powers earlier. Carrie White is revealed as the book's monster figure towards the end. She was forced to employ supernatural powers as a result of all the events and problems that led her to get trapped in psychological problems. With a focus on retaliation, Carrie examines the ideas of treating people how you would like to be treated. Carrie wants only that, based on our particular judgment. Carrie essentially wants to be loved. Even her relatives and peers don't seem to understand her.

6. References

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