

Psychoanalytic Criticism

“Porphyria’s Lover” can be broken down and analyzed in many different ways. From a psychoanalytic criticism standpoint, it is important that we figure out what is the motive, tension, and drive behind what makes these characters so complex and destructive. Freud’s summed up idea states that if we can understand the way the characters act in the text then we can comprehend the way literature is perceived and see how their meanings are portrayed. We explored the ideas of: What is the psychological being of the author and male character in the poem? What roles did the conscious and unconscious minds play throughout this poem?

To understand the mindset of the characters in this poem we must analyze some examples of what humans are like in real life. Some similarities are, humans are naturally interested in the darkness or the nonconformity of their daily lives. We crave what is not ours and for this poem the main character craves what could not be his. We are drawn to the different side of the spectrum in all aspects of life and it is there where we find revelation in who we are as humans. This is why the author wrote this poem to test the confines of human nature and to portray this lopsided spectrum of human nature. This also ties back to text that can be used for the dissection of the characters unconsciousness as an oppressed sense of individuality.

We also touched on the author playing a role of God and having this sense of control over her mind, body, and spirit. The author flirts with the idea of all-knowing and powerful but in the text it is not reciprocated due to the taboo and strict social confinement of the society. Love is a very hard word to analyze because it can be shown in many different forms but she loved him and I felt like at some points he loved her and some points he didn’t. After he strangled her he played with her corpse and positioned himself next to her to give a sense that now they can be together forever. But when she came to him he didn’t really embrace her and fall for her right away. What made his conscious mind make that decision to kill her? This is when the ID comes in. This is the characters drive to do something impactful. The ego is the conscious and the superego has to do with coexistence. This is a character who cannot control his ID acts and that is the destruction and identity issues that is displayed. He uses many different literary devices (imagery, symbolism, metaphor) to show that the ID motives devours and takes over the superego. The feelings that are reciprocated throughout the two character shows why that the ID takes over the superego. By choosing to tell this poem from the first person point of view from the narrator he can easily show the psychological and unconscious natures of the characters, in correlation to the society and the conscious desires.

This was a great choice of text to understand human behaviors and to contrast the ideas of the internal and external mind. This was a very interesting culturally repressed poem that exemplifies the unresolved tension and rapture of the Victorian Society.