

Child Abuse and Dissociative Identity Disorder: A Psychoanalytic Study of *Split* (2016) Movie

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Psychoanalytic criticism is the explanatory perception of literature by applying some techniques of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is a form of therapy proposed by the Austrian Psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) in order to treat patients of hysteria and neurosis during the late nineteenth century. "Psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorder by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind" (Barry 96). This treatment was based on the observation that the root of neurosis and other mental symptoms could be effectively determined by encouraging the patients to talk and recall memories and ideas, however seemingly unimportant. An emphasis is particularly given to juvenile sexuality. During the verbal interchange between the patient and therapist, the latter encourages the former to freely express forgotten, suppressed or repressed memories which ultimately presents an insight into the patient's neurosis or mental conflict. This cure has aptly been described as the "talking cure" by one of Freud's patients (Surprenant 199). It may be noted that the patient's willingness and trust to reveal all to the therapist is detrimental towards this cure. Freud's idea of the "unconscious", on which all his theories are based upon is a major breakthrough towards understanding the complex human psyche which was previously ignored by other theorists. "The Foundation of Freud's contribution to modern psychology is his emphasis on the unconscious aspects of the human psyche" (Guerin 127).

Freud may be credited with the understanding that our actions are largely influenced by the mental processes of the mind. This remarkable psychologist brought forward a multitude of ground-breaking ideas, each relating to the unconscious. The following are all under the aegis of Freud's concept of the realm of the "Unconscious". Before going further into the literary aspect of psychoanalysis, it is important that an understanding of the major ideas of psychoanalysis is clutched. This is due to the reason being that "Psychological criticism in the present context will, by and large, mean psychoanalysis" (Singh 164). The Id, Ego, and Superego: This theory is perhaps Freud's most popular psychoanalytic idea. According to this concept of personality structure, a human being has three psychical apparatus which may be categorized as "Id" "Ego" and "Superego". The Id is also known as the "pleasure principle" (Guerin 129). There is no combined will in the dominion of the Id. The second apparatus, i.e., the "Ego" serves as a medium between the Id and Superego. It is the voice of reason and rationality. The Ego ensures that not all the psychic activity in the Id is expressed or followed through, as some impulses within the Id may prove to be harmful to the individual. "Whereas the Id is governed solely by the pleasure principle, the ego is governed by the reality principle" (130). The Ego, therefore, goes through a process of selection and chooses which part of the Id to express and what to discard or retain within. The Ego thus acts as a regulating agent which protects a person from becoming too self-indulgent. The Ego acts as the voice of reason and controls the Id's unbridled instinct for self-gratification. The Superego is an extreme version of the Ego. Whereas the Ego serves as the rationale agent, the Superego is driven by a strong moral conscience and is therefore known as the "morality principle" (131). Largely unconscious, the Superego strives towards an unattainable human perfection. "Freud attributes the development of the Superego to the parental influence that manifests itself in terms of punishment for what society considers to be bad behavior and reward for what society considers good behavior" (131). The Id and Superego are extremes of each other and the Ego serves as the regulating agent between the two. Just as it is dangerous to give free rein to the Id factor, too strong a Superego is just as harmful.

Freud in his theory of 'Psychosexual Development' outlines the map of human development from infancy to maturity. He confirms the fact that experience while going through these stages construct an individual's identity and any hindrance during this development can dismantle one's identity. There are five developmental stages in Freud's theory: oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latent period and genital stage. Freud believed that human development moves on through a series of stages during which the pleasure-

seeking energies of the Id become focused on certain erogenous areas. This psychosexual energy (or 'libido') was described as the driving force behind behavior. Each stage has its own unique developmental challenge. The way these challenges are handled shapes personality. If the psychosexual stages are completed successfully, the result is a healthy personality. If certain issues are not resolved at the appropriate stage, 'fixation' can occur. A fixation means that too much libido will be invested in the certain psychosexual stage and the individual will behave in some ways that are characteristic of that stage. Another breakthrough in this field is Eric Erikson's theory of 'Psychosocial Development'. One of the main elements of Erikson's psychosocial stage theory is the development of 'ego identity' that is the conscious sense of self that we develop through social interaction. Our ego identity constantly changes due to new experiences and information we acquire in our daily interactions with others. Development is motivated by the sense of competence: each stage in Erikson's theory is concerned with becoming competent in an area of life. If the stage is accomplished well, the person feels a sense of excellence, which is usually referred to as ego strength or ego quality. If the stage is managed poorly, the person will emerge with a sense of inadequacy. The eight stages of Psychosocial Development are following. The first stage is Trust vs. Mistrust occurs between birth and one year of age. The second is Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt occurs between the second and the third years of age. The third stage Initiative vs. Guilt occurs during the preschool years, between the ages of three and five. The fourth stage Industry vs. Inferiority occurs between the ages of six and eleven. The fifth stage Identity vs. Confusion occurs during adolescence. The sixth stage Intimacy vs. Isolation takes place during young adulthood between the ages of approximately nineteen and forty. The seventh Generativity vs. Stagnation takes place during middle adulthood between the ages of approximately forty and sixty-five. The eighth and last stage Integrity vs. Despair occurs during old age and is focused on reflecting back on life.

Another term used in the paper is Dissociative Identity Disorder. In the history of psychology, we get to know about this kind of disorders. Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot, chief physician at Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris in 1880 discovered a new disease and named it Hystero-Epilepsy. As you can tell by the name the disorder was thought to combine some traits of two already discovered mental disorders, hysteria, and epilepsy. Ever since this was first discovered people have been fascinated with what has later become known as Multiple Personality Disorder. Dissociative identity disorder (previously known as multiple personality disorder) is later thought to be a complex psychological condition that is likely caused by many factors, including severe trauma during early childhood (usually extreme, repetitive physical, sexual, or emotional abuse).

The psychology has always been an interesting subject for philosophers and scientist as they have spent their lives to peel off its layer to expose the truth behind human behavior. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Karl Jung (1875-1961), B.F. Skinner (1904-1990), Jean Piaget (1896-1990) are among those names who have made milestones in this field. In consideration of fiction, psychology has always been an interesting medium for writers to illustrate the behavior driven by the mental traits of human beings. *Don Quixote (1605 and 1615)* by Miguel de Cervantes, *Crime and Punishment (1866)* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896)* by H.G. Wells, *The Turn of the Screw (1898)* by Henry James, *The Metamorphosis (1915)* by Franz Kafka, *A Farewell to Arms (1929)* by Ernest Hemingway, *The Stranger (1942)* by Albert Camus are the examples of prominent fiction depicting human psychology. The world cinema is also full of similar examples of taking psychology as a medium to reach to the desired climax. The movies *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)*, *A Beautiful Mind (2001)*, *The Shawshank Redemption (1994)*, *Forrest Gump (1994)*, *Inception (2010)*, *The Sixth Sense (1999)* are examples of movies based on the same subject.

The paper in hand is a critical study of *Split (2016)* movie with reference to psychologist Sigmund Freud's theory of 'Psychosexual Development' and Erik Erikson's theory of 'psychosocial development'. *Split* is a 2016 American psychological horror-thriller film written, co-produced and directed by M. Night Shyamalan and starring James McAvoy, Anya Taylor-Joy, and Betty Buckley. The main character in the film is a man with twenty-three different personalities who kidnaps and imprisons three teenage girls in an isolated underground facility. The movie is part of *Unbreakables* series. The first movie *Unbreakable (2000)* is a portrayal of some superhuman instincts of the main character. The last part Mr. Glass is not yet released.

Split movie's main plot revolves around a character named Kevin Wendell Crumb, a man suffering from Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID is mentioned in paper instead of full form) also called Multiple Personality Disorder. While going through this traumatic experience he is very well aware of his mental condition and he desires to get out of it. He is under an ongoing therapy process facilitated by a psychiatric Dr. Karen Fletcher. He often emails her to attend her individual counseling sessions. During this, she identifies twenty-three distinct personalities in Kevin. Dr. Fletcher defines all different roles played by these personalities in a case study of the main character. This movie is especially plotted to raise awareness about

the mental disorders, its causes and society's reaction to it. The story is about child abuse that results in a suppressed personality in the main character. Dr. Fletcher explains in Kevin's case study that sexual and physical exploitation has made him suppressed being.

In the movie, Kevin is portrayed living in an under construction building near the zoo. The most of the action takes place at Kevin's basement and rest of the action at Dr. Fletcher home where she is busy in writing case studies of many other patients suffering from DID. Kevin's disorder has given him a 'Psychic Determinism' (According to Freud determinism stimulated by unconscious or pre-existing mental complexes) to change the society. He, being a victim of child abuse and exploitation wants to make this world comfortable for all going through same mental disorders. His apparently depicts his sympathy for others as he always talks about other patients when he attends sessions under Dr. Fletcher's guidance. The very evidence of his determinism is clear when in the last scene all personalities talk with each other. The personalities converse with each other about the beast personality, they converse, "We trust him. He will protect us." They decide to come under the guidance of 'The Beast' personality and say, "Let him show the world how powerful we are."

Along with main character Kevin, there are two other important characters, Dr. Fletcher and Casey that support the main course of climax. Casey was with her friends Claire and Marcia planning for a birthday party when they were kidnapped by Kevin. After they were abducted in an abandoned basement. Dr. Fletcher reveals Kevin's present condition. She is treating many patients suffering from DID. It is with the portrayal of her character, the writer illustrates the problem of the disorder in personality, its symptoms, and cures. In the development of the movie, she is always making efforts to treat Kevin and to make him stay away from the destructive side of his personality. In her sessions with Kevin, she always makes him realize that he is going to recover very soon. She makes him comfortable with his state of mind. She tells Kevin all about different traits of his personalities and how they are working while dominating each other.

Casey is another main character to Kevin as she depicts his childhood. As the writer has not filmed Kevin's childhood, he has made the character of Casey do the same job. To depict the tale of child abuse, Casey's story unfolds through the flashback narrative technique. Casey was physically exploited by her uncle John who was also her legal guardian after the death of her father. Her suppressed and misfit personality is introduced in the very first scene of the movie, where she was standing near a window glass and sneaking outside. One of her friends reveals her character when she tells that she has not participated in her birthday party so it is of no use to invite her to her birthday party. She reveals to her father, "She gets detention a lot and she yells at teacher sometimes. There was that rumor that went around that she just kept running from the home." In the next scene, Casey is kidnapped with her classmates, Claire and Marcia. In the custody of Kevin, she goes into a flashback to correlate her present condition to her childhood where she was molested by her uncle. That torture has made her so suppressed and unresponsive that she has become a misfit in society. She doesn't rebel against Kevin when Claire provokes her to do so in order to get out of his custody. She completely surrenders before her situation and even after their meek requests, she refused to respond and fight back. She also fails to decide when a police officer asks whether she wants to go with her uncle or not in the last scene of the movie.

Kevin is the main character depicting the life of a person having split in personality. The split in his personality was due to his sexual and mental exploitation when he was in his childhood. DID has been defined as a disruption in what Psychologists called Identity Formation Process (early explained with the help of theories). Dr. Fletcher has found twenty-four different personalities in Kevin. These personalities were playing different roles and were named as different persons. She has studied that in his mind, these personalities sit in chairs in a room, waiting for 'Barry', the dominant personality, to grant them their turn 'in the light' (in control). She has also found that Kevin's physiology changes with each personality. Recently, 'Barry' has refused to allow 'Dennis' or 'Patricia' their turns, in part due to Dennis' tendencies towards bothering underage girls and Patricia's undesirable traits, and also because both appear to worship 'The Beast', a yet-unseen 24th personality. Fletcher has found that she can bring back Kevin's own personality by speaking his full name.

Among these personalities 'Hedwig' is the most suppressed personality. This split personality also depicts the main character's childhood. When girls interact with him, they find a grown man behaving in a very childish manner. Hedwig told them that he is living under very pathetic condition. He is considered stupid by Miss Patricia (another female personality) and also not allowed to go out in light and talk with strangers. Casey tried to trick him to get out of the basement. At last, when she was alone she made her way to his room by luring him and sympathizing with him. In his room, she sent a message on the radio to get help from outside. After getting her message a man rescued her out of the cage. 'Denis' personality depicts

the libido concepts as he obsessed with watching young girls naked. It is clear when he drags Claire to next room and tries to make her dance naked. She revolts and escapes out of his clutches. It is 'Barry' personality who is the dominate other personalities. He regulates the working of all other personalities. He always goes to Dr. Fletcher's house to attend sessions and talk about the behavior of other personalities.

'The Beast' personality is the rebellious side of Kevin's personality. It is confirmed by Dr. Fletcher that Kevin has been going through continuous suppression and he will definitely have an outburst due to this suppression. She already knows that this outburst may be destructive for him or for people around him that is the main reason why she was denying the existence of the last personality. She intends to keep Kevin under a delusion. But she surrenders her wit when she goes to meet him in his basement. When she reaches there Kevin shares the truth of the existence of the last personality. His assurance of that personality makes her afraid because she already has guessed the consequence of his rebellious side. At last when she comes to know about the kidnaped girls, she losses her life at the hands of the beast. The beast also kills Claire and Marcia but Casey escapes out of the locked room.

What happens in the last scenes is very dramatic. When Dr. Fletcher is about to die, she writes the original name of Kevin that can transform him into his real personality. Casey reads his name and shouts it loudly before him while he is approaching near to kill her. The beast personality goes but comes back after some time. During this Kevin's original personality tells him to kill him with a gun. The Beast personality has developed his skin so hard that neither the gunshot nor the knife can pierce it. He escapes and with force, he molds the cage bars to reach to Casey to kill her. At the last moment, he notices the scars on her body and realizes the pain she has been going through. He leaves her saying that she is the same as him. His last act of kindness is also the proof of his soft side that is living under the continuous suppression and the proof of his affection with the people enduring the pain of torture.

Hence, the movie fulfills its aim of the depiction of the life of mentally sick people and exploration of the reasons behind the illness. The filmmaker pursues the assistance of well-knitted plot to raise the awareness about the mental health. The main character's urge to change the world and his sympathy with people going through same distressing experience may be the urge of the writer to see the change in society and to change in the life of many mentally sick people going through different disorders like DID.

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