

I. Critical Survey of Walker Percy

Walker Percy was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on May 28, 1916. He was a descendant of a distinguished Mississippi Protestant family whose past luminaries had included congressmen and Civil War heroes. Percy's grandfather committed suicide even before he was born, setting a pattern of emotional struggle and tragic death that would haunt the boy throughout his life.

Percy's life in his childhood days was not very happy. In 1929, Percy's father killed himself while his mother was killed in what Percy later regarded as a suicidal car accident two years later. Walker with his two orphaned brothers then moved to Greenville, Mississippi, at the invitation of their bachelor uncle William Alexander Percy, who became their guardian and adopted them. There he finished his last three years of high school.

“Uncle Will” introduced Walker to many writers and poets and to a neighboring boy of his own age – Shelby Foote, a self-confident young man with literary aspirations, who became one of his closest friends. Foote and Percy both attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They also went together to visit William Faulkner, though Percy was never able to initiate conversation with him because of his shyness.

It is not that there was never serious disagreement in their close rapport. These two shared almost antithetical views on the merits of racial segregation: Percy favored the policy of separation of the races as true to the traditions of the South while the socially progressive Foote opposed the practice as backward and unfair. Percy, moved by Foote's argument, moderated his views over the time. Percy also aspired to match Foote's literary prowess, with embarrassing results. Their lifelong friendship included voluminous correspondence, the literary record of which was later collected

in book form. He flunked his placement exam in English composition when he copied the style of William Faulkner.

After graduating from college, Percy decided to embark on a medical career. He enrolled at Columbia University's medical school. Upon completing his education in 1941, he accepted an internship at New York's Bellevue Hospital. There Percy contracted tuberculosis while performing an autopsy. He spent most of the next four years recuperating at the Trudeau Sanatorium on Saranac Lake in the Adirondack Mountains of New York and in Wallingford, Connecticut. During this period of reflection, Percy began to question the ability of science to explain the basic mysteries of human existence. He read the works of Danish existentialist writer Soren Kierkegaard and the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky. These works proved revelatory and inspired Percy to become a writer rather than a physician—a pathologist of the soul rather than that of the body.

Percy returned to his native South and lived, for some time, in Sewanee, Tennessee. He studied semantics under the influence of Susanne Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key*. Percy converted to Catholicism, partly, he acknowledged, because of reading St. Augustine.

In 1946, he married Mary Bernice Townsend, a medical technician, and had and raised their two daughters in Louisiana. Thereafter they moved to New Orleans where Percy, supported by a family trust fund, spent the next seven years writing two novels that were never published.

Walker Percy died of prostate cancer in 1990 eighteen days before his 74th birthday.

He is buried on the grounds of St. Joseph's Abbey in St. Benedict, Louisiana.

Literary career

Even though Percy began, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, writing some unpublished novels and providing scholarly articles for learned journals much earlier, his advent into the literary world was heralded most discernibly to the audiences and critics only after the publication of his first novel *The Moviegoer* in 1961. He enjoyed both critical and financial success and established himself as America's leading Catholic novelist afterwards. Percy's consistent themes were the decline of the old Southern order-with its paternalism, code of honor, and sentimentality-and its succession by the New South: a sterile Hollywood-like pursuit of the American Dream. His work influenced the efforts of novelists as diverse as John Hawkes and Richard Ford, and kept alive the rich tradition of southern fiction dating back through Welty, O'Connor and Faulkner.

Walker Percy was a prolific writer who produced and published six novels and a number of other nonfictional works. Percy's subjects are language, literature, psychological complexities, existential dilemmas, religion and the American South, which he canvasses in a series of book reviews, letters, addresses, essays and interviews. Several essays deal with Percy's Catholicism and the role he believes it plays in his life and in the modern world. Critics note that Percy stands out among most of his fellow novelists because of the way he combines an interest in science and religion with a very sophisticated theory of language and explores the dislocation of man in the modern age. A thumbnail sketch of the fictional works on the basis of their thematic issues and the enumeration of the nonfictional publications are presented below.

The major Percian fictional books dealing with the theme of existentialist concerns are *The Moviegoer* (1961), *The Second Coming* (1980) and *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book* (1983), while the novels that foreground the issues

of psychological and pathological problems are *The Thanatos Syndrome* (1987) and *Signposts in a Strange Land* (1991). These novels in the course of their narrative frequently and unambiguously raise the thematic issues such as language, literature, religion and the American south.

The non-fictional works of Walker Percy have not been able to accumulate much scholarly and critical accolade in the literary sphere. His non-fictions include *Bourbon* (1982), *The City of the Dead* (1985), *Conversations with Walker Percy* (1985), *The Correspondence of Shelby Foote and Walker Percy* (1996), *Diagnosing the Modern Malaise* (1985), *Going Back to Georgia* (1978), *How to Be an American Novelist in Spite of Being Southern and Catholic* (1984), *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book* (1983), *The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man is, How Queer Language is, and What one has to Do with the Other* (1975), *More Conversations with Walker Percy* (1993), *Novel-Writing in an Apocalyptic Time* (1986), *Questions they Never Asked me* (1979), *State of the Novel: Dying Art or New Science* (1988), and *A Thief of Peirce: The Letters of Kenneth Laine Ketner and Walker Percy* (1995).

Interestingly, out of six fictional works that he published in his lifetime, three received honors and award. He won the National Book Award in 1961 for his first published novel *The Moviegoer*. His third novel *Love in the Ruins* (1971) received the National Catholic Book Award in 1972 while his *The Second Coming* (1981) received The Los Angeles Times Book Prize and P.E.N. Faulkner Award, National Book Circle Citation, and American Book Award nomination. In addition, his other nonfiction *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book* (1983) won the St. Louis Literary Award in 1986.

Background to the present study

As would be delineated in the next subheading of this chapter, this catholic novel has been reviewed by a number of critics for drawing various conclusions employing different procedure and heterogeneous theoretical assumptions. Inspired either by religious or political presuppositions, these critics hardly seem to concur at any point except that they all are what New Critics would have termed external. Judging the novel from all the available commentaries and criticism, it would by no means be unfair to say that the novel still has not acquired the required textual approach, which alone is appropriate to analyze the failings of the main character.

The story of the novel revolves, as indicated by the sub-title *The Adventure of a Bad Catholic at a Time near the End of the World*, around the protagonist of the novel. Convinced that the world is very near to apocalyptic ending because of the escalating mental disorder in human being, the protagonist Dr. Thomas More resolves to do anything that would deter it. Amidst his unpredictable swings of mood, frequently occurring mental instability and physical frailty that often impels him to stay in the hospital bed, he nurtures, deep inside the corner of his heart, a *raison d'être* -- a hope of publishing what he thinks would be the epoch-making article about his invention in one of the leading science magazines of the world. He is deeply convinced that his invention he calls "Qualitative Quantitative Ontological Lapsometer" (42) would not only fathom the electrical malfunctioning in human heart thereby saving the world from the imminent ending but also in the long run would bring him an enduring fame, possibly in the form of Nobel Prize.

Despite his desperate yet amateur efforts, Dr. More is unable provide the scientific backing to the device in both the effective diagnosis of the malaise and attempts for its remedy. His initial impression is that the medical device is ineffective only in the remedy. After much rumination, however, when he discovers that he

cannot, if asked to prove empirically, provide the scientific basis of his invention, he begins to realize its weakness even in the diagnosis. Therefore, he considers it safe to opt out of the scientific career and decides to get married and settle down.

There is a tendency among the literary critics to relate the Percy's novel with psychological insight and interpret accordingly. While some of those pieces of criticism are logically backed and thus fair, some of them seem to have been superimposed from without and reveal more about prejudices of the critics than the genuine want of the text. Being the story of the psychiatrist, however, the application of the psychological tool in the reading of this novel can reasonably be justified. Besides, there are other textual and extra-textual evidences which provide the adequate or ample logical basis for applying psychoanalysis as a tool for analyzing this novel.

The first reason is that the protagonist, around whom the story of the novel is centered, is himself a psychiatrist who spends a great deal of time exploring the psychological complexities of other patients. Just as he believes that deeply suppressed psychological traumas account for the success or the failure of human action in life, so it is justifiable to apply the same yardstick for fathoming and assessing the failure of the More's scientific career.

The second reason is again related to the protagonist's mental state. Being a mentally unstable and psychologically troubled person, Dr. More confesses that he has spent much of his time in the hospital--both as a doctor and as a patient. To analyze the troubled psychological state of the doctor, the application of psychoanalytical insight is not just appropriate but indispensable as well. Therefore, it seems very logical that psychoanalysis alone can bring to the fore the complexities that underlie his failure in the scientific world.

Thirdly, other characters in the novel also hint that psychoanalytical insight is needed in order to unravel the mental complexities of the protagonist. In fact, at one occasion, a character named Max does attempt, though with little avail, to trace down the mental disorder of More to sex-related trauma. But for him to prove the psychiatrist himself a psychological patient was not only difficult but impossible. However, to the unbiased eyes of the independent analyst, the doctor transpires to be more a patient than a doctor, waiting to be cured by than to cure the people.

Finally, the fact that the author deliberately makes the protagonist's psychological complexities the subject and the motif of the novel and that his other novels like *Thanatos Syndrome*, whose hero is also Doctor Thomas More, obviously deal with the psychological problems also corroborate the fact why the psychoanalytical theory is applicable and essential to read this novel.

Review of Literature

After its publication in 1971, the novel *Love in the Ruins* has garnered a wide range of critical considerations from a number of academicians, researchers, and scholars alike. Some critics have viewed the novel as a critique of Cartesian ideal of epistemology and as the novel of ideas while some others as the text embodying existential angst.

As has been the general case with other Percian novels, the novel has often been interpreted associating with the religious themes. One prominent critic Franklin Arthur Wilson analyses the text by bringing in the Biblical references and explores the sacramental intersection between flesh and spirit:

The grace of divine life enters by the means of sacramental incarnation obscenity eating and drinking the flesh and the blood of a crucified man-enters by means of the low places of or it enters not at all. Percy

anchors them more to life through John's, the life Tom and Ellen share is the life Tom receives by eating Christ and drinking his blood. While the way the novel ends certainly bears romantic overtones, Percy utilizes romance as an expression of the sacramental intersection between flesh and spirit, the marriage of Christ to his church in the Eucharistic feast, and the consequential goodness of the marriage consummated by Tom and Ellen. The life they share is a love in the ruins of Christ's crucified body and blood. It is the eternal life of Christ Himself amid the patched-up ruins of daily life. (208)

Preoccupied with the religious aspect of the novel, Franklin Arthur Wilson examines Percy's use of sacramental appearance of love for exemplifying Bible-dictated way of human life. However, this interpretation, on the one hand, does not seem to make comprehensive study of the text while, on the other, appears indigestible to the readers having secular or non-Christian beliefs.

The traditional approach which emphasizes the pivotal role of Cartesian formulations to the interpretation of the literary artifacts has not evaded even this text. Another renowned critic Jon Young, in "Walker Percy on Cartesian Ideal of Knowing", comments:

Tom's evaluation of the Cartesian ideal of knowing has changed even further in the epilogue, set five years after the main events of the novel. Tom continues to use the lapsometer in diagnosis, and he remains convinced that the lapsometer can "save the world". But he has clashed trying to know the world exclusively from the detached, abstract perspective of science. "Strange", Tom says, "I am older, yet there seems to be more time, time for watching and waiting and thinking and

working” (127). In the constant watch, wait, think and work, Tom has re-entered the human world from which he had been expelled by his own commitment to the Cartesian ideal. (140)

As he observes the side of Cartesian epistemological ideals only, this textual analysis is inadequate to understand the sufferings, perception, life and the true character of the protagonist.

The tendency to interpret a text as the influence of writers of preceding generation was just on the rise when the novel was published. Applying Bloomian notion of influence, Joseph Bizup also reviews the novel as the influence of Hopkins in the following lines:

Thomas’ progression from a belief in science that excludes god to a point where he can accept god’s grace is represented in microcosm by a sequence of allusions to Hopkins early in the dream. These allusions are an integral part of the symbolism of the dream and grow increasingly explicit as Tom moves toward a sacramental view of the world. The sequence begins with the inversion of the imagery in god’s grandeur. (256)

Here, we can detect, through the reference of god made in the text, allusions to Hopkins poetry in the novel. No attempt is made in this seminal paper, however, to explore the complex psychological make-up, familial and social aloofness of the protagonist in the narrative whatsoever.

The novel has also been interpreted as the one that seeks to bridge the dichotomy between psychiatry and Christianity. While commenting on the Dan Blazer’s celebrated book *Freud vs. God*, the critic Peter D. Kramer states that after the

evolution of the concept psychiatry, there has always been an antagonistic relationship between psychology and theology.

In his eschatological comedy, *Love in the Ruins*, Walker Percy arms his protagonist—the lapsed Catholic, lapsed psychiatrist Tom More—with a magical hand-held brain scanner. This "Qualitative Quantitative Ontological Lapsometer" measures the state of patients' souls, particularly the tendency toward angelism, localized in Brodmann area 32. Such a device would go a long way toward integrating theology and biological psychiatry. (156)

In his view, the novel to a significant degree attempts to reconcile these disparate disciplines.

Related to this view is another bent of criticism which depicts the percian novel to be an effort on the part of the author to establish a strong connection between the science of medicine and the spirituality. Known in the literary world as the Percy pundit, the critic Lewis A. Lawson in his argumentative article "Walker Percy: The Physician as Novelist" says:

... [There] is the reconciliation of the lay person and the expert, who jointly recognize their overwhelming concern with an area of existence for which there can only be subjective answers. But they are together in their uncertainty. Whereas when he gave up medicine he felt that it was blind to spiritual, existential matters, he now must believe that there is at least a minority, perhaps growing, scientific view that encompasses the trans-empirical within its ken. Thus there need no longer be the breach between lay knowledge and scientific knowledge in Dr. Percy's fictional strategy. (63)

There may not always remain the purported antagonism between science and the world of spirituality in the long run. The writer ends the article with an optimistic note that the Percian novels in the future would certainly clear up the confusions that result in the scientific and spiritual anachronism.

This novel has also been analyzed by employing existential theoretical assumptions. A thesis researcher Bhakti Upadhyaya examines, despite acknowledging the protagonist's heroic "struggle for his existence" (43), the existential crisis of Thomas More in the novel. She concludes the thesis by stating:

The novel has presented an individual of a modern world who represents the human suffering after the World Wars. Doctor Thomas More has no desire of living in this meaningless world, because he cannot materialize the ambition. He is living because he has no other choice. However, his own choice of living in the world and create his own identity is shattered and crushed. This frustration makes his remaining life like the life of vegetable or that of any non-human being without any hope or expectation. (44)

In this dissertation, she applies theoretical assumptions of Sartre to examine Thomas More's existential angst, which is conveyed to us through his retrospective narration. However, the dissertation too seems to lack both the elaborate presentation of tool and the indentured analysis of the text itself.

As is evident in the aforementioned excerpts of criticism, the critics have been lavish in expounding their diverse views regarding this novel. But, as we survey the critical opinions about the novel, none of the researchers seem to apply the psychoanalytical theory of sublimation to interpret this award-winning American text

to the date. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to approach, interpret and analyze the novel employing the Freudian theory of sublimation.

II. Psychoanalysis and Sublimation

Psychoanalysis

The term psychoanalysis was set current by the Austrian Psychologist Sigmund Freud to designate a specialized procedure for the investigation of the unconscious mind that he initially employed for some therapeutic ends. Its primary objective was, for Freud, to cope with then-prevalent psychological complexities such as psychosis and neurosis. Freud believes that these complexities, brought about by the burden of civilization, impel the human individuals to repress their culturally unacceptable wishes or desires such as Oedipus complex, Electra complex and infant sexual traumas. These repressed desires, confined into the realm of what Freud calls the unconscious, bring about aforementioned psychological complexities, which can successfully be healed if these are brought into the awareness of the patients.

Psychoanalysis typically attempts to solve such mental difficulties by employing a method that engages the patient in a conversation with the analyst in which the patient's resistance is gradually overcome.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory, coming at the turn of the century, provided a radically new approach to the analysis and treatment of abnormal adult behavior. Earlier views tended to ignore behavior and looked for a physiological explanation of abnormality. The novelty of Freud's approach was in recognizing the fact that neurotic behavior is not random or meaningless but goal-directed. Thus, by looking for the purpose behind so-called "abnormal" behavioral patterns, the analyst was given a method for understanding behavior as meaningful and informative, without denying its physiological aspects.

Before elaborating the concept of sublimation, which would be applied in this research as a major theoretical tool to analyze the text, it becomes essential to have

very brief discussion on some of the pertinent psychoanalytical terminologies. As the critics duo Rudolf Bernet and K.U. Leuven argue in their scholarly article “Sublimation and Symbolization: An Aristotelian Psychoanalysis”, the illusive concept of sublimation cannot be understood without a previous understanding of some key psychoanalytic concepts. Therefore, it seems worthwhile here to draw a thumbnail sketch of some major theoretical terms and concepts that frequently appear in the discussion of psychoanalysis.

Freud's account of the unconscious, and the psychoanalytical therapy associated with it, is best illustrated by his famous tripartite model of the structure of the mind or personality. The personality of the individual is dependent upon the interaction of three mental structures: the id, the ego and the super ego while their behaviors are usually the result of the interactions within this system.

According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality, the Id is the personality component made up of unconscious psychic energy that works to satisfy basic urges, needs, and desires. The Id operates based on the pleasure principle, which demands immediate gratification of needs. The Super Ego, for Freud, is the component of personality composed of our internalized ideals that we have acquired from our parents and from society. The Super Ego works to suppress the urges of the Id and tries to make the Ego behave morally, rather than realistically.

The Ego, likewise, is the largely unconscious part of personality that mediates the demands of the Id, the Super Ego, and reality. The Ego prevents us from acting on our basic urges created by the Id, but also works to achieve a balance with our moral and idealistic standards created by the Super Ego. The Ego operates based on the reality principle, which works to satisfy the desires created by the Id in a realistic and socially appropriate manner.

In short, the healthy, mature the Ego translates the demands of both the Id and the super-the Ego into terms which allow admission of them without destruction. Thus, constructive acceptance and transformation of the demands made by both the Id and Super- Ego are techniques of the Ego and essential elements of mental health.

The concept of unconscious is yet another fundamental premise in Freudian theory of psychoanalysis. Although the term was used before Freud, it was he who gave it a special meaning which can be understood in relation to the theory and practice of psychoanalysis as a whole. Robert Bocoock in his book entitled *Sigmund Freud* contends that the concept was already in the practice as it could be empirically tested in the works of Shakespeare, Goethe, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Feuerbach and Schiller (17).

The unconscious is that part of the mind that lies outside the somewhat vague and porous boundaries of consciousness, and is constructed in part by the repression of that which is too painful to remain in consciousness. This unconscious part of the mind includes some material which has been dissociated from conscious thinking, and some that can relatively easily become conscious - the pre-conscious contents. The pre-conscious is described as having no sense of awareness but its contents are available for recall. The unconscious contains memories which have been repressed, and under normal circumstances cannot be recalled.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, the role of repression to the formation of the unconscious is immense. For Freud, there are two kinds of repression. The first consists of making an experience unconscious; that is, material in the preconscious that is inadmissible to consciousness is pushed back into the unconscious. Whereas, the second is itself an unconscious process and this consists of forbidding material to

enter the preconscious, so that it remains uninspected in the subconscious. Painful trauma is thus shut off from the consciousness.

According to Sigmund Freud, the unconscious plays the pivotal and formative role in the development of human personality. It is the central and driving force which directs the human individuals towards the initiation of an action.

Deeply associated with this view of the mind is Freud's account of the instincts or drives. The instincts, for Freud, are the principal motivating forces in the mental realm, and as such they energize the mind in all of its functions. There are, he held, an indefinitely large number of such instincts, but these can be reduced to a small number of basic ones, which he grouped into two broad generic categories-- Eros or the life instinct, which covers all the self-preserving and erotic instincts, and Thanatos or the death instinct, which covers all the instincts towards aggression, self-destruction, and cruelty. Thus, it would be a misinterpretation of Freud to assert that all human actions spring from motivations which are sexual in their origin, since those which derive from Thanatos are not sexually motivated. Indeed, Thanatos is the irrational urge to destroy the source of all sexual energy in the annihilation of the self. At the same time, it is undeniably true that Freud gave sexual drives an importance and centrality in human life, human actions, and human behavior because, in his view, the sexual drives exist and can be discerned in children from birth, and that sexual energy or libido is the single most important motivating force in adult life. However, Freud effectively redefined the term sexuality later on to make it cover any form of pleasure which is or can be derived from the body. Thus, his theory of the instincts or drives is essentially that the human being is energized or driven from birth by the desire to acquire and enhance bodily pleasure.

These fundamental impulses, which are usually asocial, cannot be acted upon by human beings in the civilized society. So the society and its overbearing presence in Homo sapiens in the form of super-the Ego impel them, as per the requirements of the external world, to modify the pleasure principle in favor of the reality principle. Psychological defense mechanisms are those psychological strategies used by individuals that work by distorting the Id impulses into acceptable forms, or by unconscious blockage of these impulses in order to cope with reality and to maintain self-image intact. In other words, an Ego defense mechanism is an unconscious personality reaction that the Ego uses to protect our conscious mind from threatening feelings or perceptions. Anna Freud described this phenomenon as not directly a conflicted instinctual tension but a signal occurring in the Ego of an anticipated instinctual tension.

While Sigmund Freud was the first person to develop the theory of defense mechanisms, the credit for clarifying and conceptualizing it goes to his daughter Anna Freud. She has enumerated and described in great details the different types of defense mechanisms which include compensation, denial, displacement, dissociation, escapism, humor, idealization, intellectualization, introjections, inversion, isolation, minimizing, projection, rationalization, reaction formation, regression, repression, splitting, substitution, undoing, suppression and sublimation. These all conscious and unconscious defense mechanisms operate differently to ensure the similar, if not identical, results as discussed earlier. Having tentatively laid down the basic principles of psychoanalysis, I now turn the attention to the discussion of sublimation, the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Sublimation: Etymological and Historical Evolution of the Term

Orthographically speaking, the term sublimation appears to have derived from the word sublime. It turns out that sublime and subliminal both are related to the Latin word 'limen' or lintel. The lintel is the beam that forms the upper part of a window or door, and supports part of the structure above it. This lintel is thus a threshold; we get the word 'limen' to mean the threshold of a physiological or psychological response. 'Sub + limen' gives us, in various forms, words that mean passing under, through, and over a metaphorical threshold.

The idea of sublimation leads back also to the alchemical metaphor of the transmutation of base metal into gold. In the medieval period, the term was widely used in the sense mentioned in the preceding sentence. This sense of 'ennoblement', 'embellishment' or 'making higher' is still pertinent to the meaning of the term as formulated by Freud. For him, the ennoblement or embellishment of the fantasy of a genuine intra-instinctual process is the transformation of object libido into the Ego libido before it could assume new aims.

The concepts of sublimation and sublime are thousands of years older than the science of psychoanalysis. The term was on the currency from the very outset of the intellectual thoughts beginning from as early as the Greek civilization. The Greek Old Testament, *the Septuagint*, employs the term 'hupsous' or sublime to refer to God's loftiness over human folly and lowliness. (Gay 91) But, it was Longinus, the writer of Greek treatise "On the Sublime", who held the most systematic and elaborate discussion of the term and its then prevalent meaning. Though Longinus in the treatise employs the term sublime in a very different context and sense than did Freud in the nineteenth century, the credit for bringing this term into the literary sphere and providing the term its rudimentary meaning nevertheless goes to this Greek literary theoretician. "For the true sublime, by some virtue of its nature, elevates us: uplifted

with a sense of proud possession, we are filled with joyful pride..." (Adams 73). In the quoted passage, for instance, the fundamental sense of the term can be certainly, if unclearly, discerned.

The word sublime reverberated frequently in the realm of aesthetics from the ancient world of Longinus to Romanticism of Goethe, from Locke and Kant to Wordsworth and Schopenhauer. People are tempted even to say that the concept was present in the intellectual thought of the Greek philosopher Plato. Dr Sandrine Berges, in the seminal paper entitled "Plato, Nietzsche, and Sublimation", argues that the concept of sublimation was not only present in the intellectual formulations of Plato and Nietzsche but, as the writer strives strenuously to prove it, they clearly favored it over another widespread but unhealthy psychological process repression.

Even though the concept of sublime came to the literary world much earlier, its derivative —sublimation— received far less creative attention and critical considerations, as compared to the term sublime, before the advent of Sigmund Freud at the turn of nineteenth century. The great Austrian psychological scientist gave it the currency, however, not without loading the term with some theoretical nuances in the meaning.

Sublimation Defined

Freud believed that human beings are born with certain kind and degree of psychic energy which generally takes the form of sexual or aggressive feelings. As both of the aforesaid outlets are asocial and therefore threaten the patina of rational composure of human beings, they become obliged either to repress it and consequently become a neurotic, or to sublimate. Introducing the term in the essay entitled "Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness" anthologized in the volume *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud comments:

The sex drive ... is probably more highly developed in human beings. It puts huge amount of energy at the disposal of cultural activity... [because of] its ability to shift its aim without any great loss of energy. This capacity to exchange the originally sexual aim for another- which is no longer sexual but psychically related to the first- is called the capacity for sublimation. (90)

Sublimation is a form of defense mechanism that generally refers to the transformation of instinctual impulses and libidinal desires into socially acceptable, appropriate and useful activities. Sublimation is the refocusing of psychic energy away from negative outlets, toward positive, or the rechanneling of drives which cannot otherwise find an outlet. It is often the transmutation of either the repressed sexual energy or the aggressive feelings for higher purposes of non-sexual and non-violent nature.

The diverted energy, made possible by the successful occurrence of sublimation, results in the remarkable contributions in the artistic, scientific or other creative fields. Highlighting what today is considered as one of the most contentious of his coinages, Freud in his book on Leonardo states:

[Sublimation] enables excessively strong excitations arising from particular sources of sexuality to find an outlet and use in other fields, so that a not inconsiderable increase in psychological efficiency results from a disposition which is itself perilous. Here we have one of the origins of artistic creativity — and, according to the completeness or incompleteness of the sublimation, a characterological analysis of a highly gifted individual. (67)

Freud saw sublimation as society's means of achieving impulsive renunciation without appealing to repression. But more importantly, he saw it as the individual's means of achieving rational control over the dark forces of the unconscious mind. Sublimation is the work of the Ego, the rational self, and what it achieves is "a diffusion of the instincts and liberation of the aggressive instincts in the Super Ego" (68).

In his "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis", Freud wrote "Among the instinctual forces which are put to this [civilizing] use the sexual impulses play an important part; in this process they are sublimated..." (27). This process "consists in the sexual trend abandoning its aim of obtaining a sexual component or a reproductive pleasure and taking on another which is related genetically to the abandoned one but is itself no longer sexual and must be described as social. We call this process sublimation, in accordance with the general estimate that places social aims higher than the sexual ones, which are at bottom self-interested" (29). And, "Professional activity is a source of special satisfaction if it is a freely chosen one—if, that is to say, by means of sublimation, it makes possible the use of existing inclinations, of persisting or constitutionally reinforced instinctual impulses" (27).

In order for sublimation to occur, the simultaneous operation of mechanisms of repression and displacement is a prerequisite:

[Sublimation] places extraordinary large amounts of force at the disposal of civilized activity and it does it in virtue of its especially worked characteristic of being able to displace its aim without materially diminishing its intensity. This [is a] capacity to exchange its originally sexual aim for another one, which is no longer sexual but which is psychologically related to the first aim. (94)

Sublimation, to put it differently, channels this energy away from destructive or inappropriate acts and into something that is socially acceptable and creatively effective.

The role of sublimation to the development of personal self as well as human race in general is, according to the Austrian psychoanalyst, is of paramount importance. Freud believed that the greatest achievements in civilization were made due to the effective sublimation of sexual and aggressive urges that are sourced in the Id and then channeled by the Ego as directed by the Super Ego. Classical theory regarded creative and artistic tendencies as manifestations of sublimation. The importance of this defense mechanism is also highlighted by the fact that psychoanalysts often refer to sublimation as the only truly successful defense mechanism and by the assertion of Freud that culture owes many of its conquests to the sublimation of sexual cravings.

The concept of sublimation not only exhibits the ultimate horizon of the opposition or conflict between individual sexual demands and the demands of civilized social life, the aim or even the ethical norm of therapeutic action, but it also provides a striking outline of the conception which psychoanalytic theory has of the human being.

Besides Freud who very reticently and vaguely introduced and defined the term, there are other critics who have made substantial research on this illusive term and have expounded their views on the topic. One among them is the scholar named J. Trevor Davies. In his view, sublimation is such diversion of instinctive energy into higher and socially useful processes. It is effected by objective values, through man's devotion to them. Moreover, sublimation may be consciously directed; and it may be applied not merely to man's surplus emotional energy but to all his instinctive energy.

Thus, sublimation is more than a safety valve for superfluous energy. It is also more than a "second-best way." Sublimation is "as natural as the direct gratification of the instinct"(129); art, music, learning, and religion are as "natural" to men as sexual inter- course, physical combat, or running from danger and as satisfying. The moral self, the abiding self, is in control. "Best of all is it when the individual consciously and deliberately seeks to be moved by the Sum and Ground of all moral values, God, and makes 'the Will of God' his end and aim, as Jesus did" (130). Sublimation proceeds ideally through consecration to sanctification, a process "capable of continual increase and expression." Sublimation is "a means of satisfying the total needs of the individual" (131). The limits of sublimation Davies finds in "what there is in a man to sublimate" (125).

Operation of Sublimation

Because of the sublimation, humans engage in an increasingly intense--not to say obsessive-intellectual research, so that almost all creative energy finally comes to be channeled into knowledge without any possibility for possible reconversion.

Sublimation cannot occur unless there is the presence of the interest in the subjectivity of a person arising from the prior energy. The power diverted through the process of sublimation works only as reinforcement and not as an initiator in the human subjects:

We consider it probable that an instinct like this of excessive strength [in the life of an individual] was already active in the subject's earliest childhood, and that its supremacy was established by impressions in the child's life. [This is the first part of the hypothesis underlying sublimation; now for the second:] We make the further assumption that it found reinforcement from what were originally sexual instinctual

forces, so that later it could take the place of a part of the subject's sexual life. (Freud, *Leonardo*, 77)

As is evident in the passage, the first condition for the successful occurrence of sublimation is the presence of the prior interest in the realm into which the sublimation is to occur. As such, it can occur only as the supplement or the additional reinforcement to the earlier energy prevalent in the given person.

The second principle of the sublimation is that it can occur only when the pleasure-seeking tendency of the Id is curbed. Without having the fundamental drives tamed, one cannot think of channeling them to something other and higher. Similarly, the psychic energy has to be transformed into the realm which is emotionally in pro rata distance to the point of its origin. That is, the emotions of most sensual and personal nature must be transformed into such areas as science, religion and morality, which are far away from their point of origin to be the most impersonal and platonic in nature.

For the successful operation of the sublimation to occur, however, individuals require to have a mental make-up with strong sense of purpose. "It is the individual's constitution that determines how much of his sex drive can be sublimated and utilized" (*Civilization*, 91). He further comments:

The task of mastering such a powerful impulse as the sex drive otherwise than by satisfying it is one that can call for the whole of one's powers. Only a minority succeeds in mastering it by sublimation, by directing the sexual aims and towards higher cultural goals, and even this minority probably succeeds only for a time, and at least easily through the period of ardent youthful vigours. (95)

As implied in the above quoted excerpt, the occurrence of sublimation is not an ordinary phenomenon. It cannot be experienced in the life of ordinary human beings. It calls for a great deal of effort and power to go through such rare and subliminal experiences on the part of the person involved in it. On the top of that, because “the relation between possible sublimation and necessary sexual activity naturally varies a good deal from individual and even between different callings (98)”, the covetous experience becomes even more difficult to bring about in our life.

Sublimation is both the conscious and unconscious process. It is, in fact, often a subconscious process caused by profound repression, and tends to involve our most insistent instinctual drives - usually sexuality. It is as though, because it is one of our basic drives, the subconscious strives to turn us away from that activity to ensure the integrity of the repression. Sublimation remains in operation in fact even when people are unaware that such situation exists, or even that it is possible.

Sublimation and Genius

The concept of genius is directly related to the psychological process of sublimation. Freud credits all the innovations in artistic world and major breakthroughs in the scientific world to this process. Any person without the capability of sublimating the psychic forces into higher ambitions cannot be regarded as the genius. In other words, a genius is called so only because s/he is able to channel his libidinal power into the field s/he works.

However, only a handful of human beings successfully manage to redirect the demands of Id. Consequently, very limited numbers of people are grouped under this rubric of intellectual elite. Nevertheless, even those insignificant numbers have been able to bring about the greatest achievements in the evolution of the human civilizations. The limits of sublimation Davies finds in "what there is in a man to

sublimate"(127). Sublimation alone will not make a genius. It will, however, make for the best life of which the individual is capable; and any failure to sublimate proves defect in the person and not in the principle.

Failure of Sublimation

As Freud believed, people are born with certain strength to sublimate their more perverse sexual instincts, which vary from one person to another. Some people are more able than others to repress their more perverse sexual desires into culturally valued activities such as scientific or artistic work. Education aims at directing the young to sublimate their sexual desires into a variety of socially acceptable and useful activities from mathematics, to art, to sport.

However, not all the people are capable of rechanneling psychic energy into culturally valued works. There are a number of reasons behind it. For example, strength of sexual drives in some people could be so strong that they could not sublimate all or most of their sexuality into such socially useful actions. Such people either act on their potential disapproval of society's moral guardians or they succumb to illness, especially psychoneuroses.

These sexual energies are not capable of cultural sublimation either because they are too strong for that or because the person lacks any special intellectual or artistic skill or they are never developed in them.

Sublimation and its Problems

Even though the Freudian proposition of the concept of sublimation has been extremely useful to account for the various psychological states and developments, it is at the same time one of the few words in the world that has been most viciously debated over and misinterpreted.

One of the main reasons behind this contention is that the term, far from being univocal, invites multiple interpretations and thus adds to a number of the difficulties that arise. Authors duo Jean Laplanche and Richard Miller in their article entitled “To Situate Sublimation” contend that the second dubious point in the Freudian theory of sublimation is that the term by definition operates only on what we call lower drives and is thus inapplicable in case of higher drives. Their point is that if the process of sublimation can redirect the lower forms of wishes into something higher, then it can also be the case that the higher be sublimated, if that is the term, to be lower ones.

In their discussion of the psychoanalytic notion of sublimation, Laplanche and Pontalis note that “the lack of a coherent theory of sublimation remains one of the lacunae in psychoanalytic thought” (433). Earlier, Hartmann had stated: “Despite the broad and general use made by analysts of the concept of sublimation and despite many attempts to free it from ambiguities, there is no doubt that a certain amount of discontent with some of its facets is rather common among us” (434). In an earlier generation, similarly, Glover had expressed his discontentment with the ambiguity of sublimation: “It is generally agreed that prior to 1923 a good deal of confusion existed regarding the exact nature of sublimation. Since then, it has increased rather than diminished” (Gay, 97).

In 1939, the Chicago psychoanalyst Harry B. Lee completed a study of the Freudian concept of sublimation in which he wrote: "a very large share of the psychoanalytical literature dealing with the problem of sublimation treats of artistic sublimation, and consists mostly of pathobiography whose scientific value is highly questionable." Further on, he summarizes:

Freud's generalizations about sublimation have remained untested and unverified. [...] One concludes from the literature quoted that the

concept of sublimation is an improved recapitulation of empirically known facts, confused, obscure, incomplete, redundant, static and lacking in objective verification; that the most probable reason for our negligence lies in a subjectivity associated with the difficulty of the problem. (83)

Whether the word "subjectivity" employed here refers to that of Freud or of the psychoanalysts in general is not clear, but Lee's statements help to highlight the difficulties awaiting the reviewer of Freud's book.

As indicated by the thumbnail discussion of the inherent confusion regarding the theoretical concept carried by the term, the proposition of sublimation is replete with such and many other problems which make the concept hazy and abstruse.

To sum up, the psychoanalytical conception of sublimation, though contentious, has been immensely fruitful in the investigation of the careers of geniuses. Putting aside the debate whether or not it is appropriate to psychoanalyze the characters of fictional works, I have applied this illusive standard of psychoanalytical formulation to investigate the scientific career of a fictional hero Thomas More, who even with the best will in the world fails to match the yardstick.

III. Failure of Sublimation

The conclusion of this chapter is dependent upon three major premises: that the protagonist of the novel possesses psychic energy, which is manifest primarily in the form of his overbearing sexuality; that he has the genuine willingness to redirect aforesaid libidinal desires into socially valuable scientific work; and that he is unable of sublimate it. As a natural outcome of these syllogistically drawn premises, the claim being made is that the protagonist's adventure into innovative scientific work ends in failure.

In order to prove that the protagonist fails to sublimate the psychic energy into his professional work, it becomes essential first to establish that he possesses that force in abundance. So, the initial endeavor would be to look for those incidents and thoughts that give us some clue to presence of the dynamic energy in him and its manifestation in various forms.

As an individual, Thomas More is a reservoir of dynamic energy, continuously seeking a means of discharge. This veritable storehouse of energy called the Libido or the energy empowering the life instinct in Thomas is mainly traceable through his inclination towards sexual satisfaction.

The Protagonist and his Sexuality

The novel can arguably be said to be the story of the protagonist Tom More. Named after the Renaissance scholar Thomas More, the protagonist initially gives the impression that he is sexually ascetic person. From the fact that he intends, and partly is able, to pursue the career of a scientist, our suspicion grows even stronger. And, when it comes to the fore that he has been separated from his wife for this very reason, our initial impression consolidates.

However, it does not take long for our impressionistic conclusion about the character of the protagonist to shatter. Our initial hypothesis about him that he is a dedicated man of science who would sacrifice anything including sex for the betterment of the world and humanity is not only repudiated but also reversed. Thomas More reveals his surprising, and to many shocking, side of his character very shortly after the novel begins: “I love women best, music and science next, whiskey next, God fourth and my fellowmen hardly at all” (6).

The presence and profundity of More’s sexuality is observable in a number love and lust affairs into which Tom indulges himself. Particularly, his desperate attempts of making love with Moira in the deserted motel, the unsuccessful attempt of making love with Lola in the bunker, doom-inviting but extremely physically satisfying coitus with Doris and unanticipated marriage with Ellen Oglethorpe in a way or other highlight the sexuality of the narrator of the novel.

Thomas More believes that the relationship between and among human beings can be anything but spiritual. As Doris reveals it in the conversation with him:

“You know the trouble with you, Tom?”

“What?”

“You don’t understand a purely spiritual relationship.”

“That’s true.” (71)

On the contrary, he always indulges himself in physical pleasures such as whisky and sex. She, in fact, enunciates her attitude toward him in very clear words, which come to us in the narrated sentence of More: “She said I was like a Polack miner coming out of the earth every night with no thought but to fill his belly and hump his wife” (72).

Indeed, Dr. Tom More hardly ever understands the value of love except for the sexual purpose. When his mother tells that Lola would be a perfect match for him and that he could very well marry her, he declines it there and then, although he is aware of the fact that it was she who had “saved his life at the expense of her reputation, went to fetch her father as I lay dying in the bunker” (175). The incident had occurred at the Christmas eve when Lola and Tom made passionate love-encounter, after which the doctor fell unconscious. Commenting, though to himself, on the suggestion of mother Tom says:

What mother does not understand is that we loved each other for one night and that was the end of it. One night I sang between her knees like on antique cello while she watched the wheeling constellations. A perfect, joyous encounter, but it is not to be though that we could repeat it. That was all for the Virginia aristocratic girl. (176)

The presence of overbearing sexuality is found in Thomas More not only when he is young, energetic and healthy but also when he is senile, physically frail and mentally unstable. The presence of sexuality in Thomas more is so strong that he does not spare even the woman who comes to cure him. He is instantly attracted to the nurse serving him in the hospital bed. He recounts his experience with her in the midst of what can be said one of the most tragic scenes of the novel.

Miss Oglethrope, a handsome strapping nurse (she’s now my nurse) came on at eleven and asked me what I wanted. “I want you, Miss Oglethrope. You are beautiful and I need you and love you. Will you lie here with me?” since she was and I did, was beautiful and I did love and need her, she being a woman knows the truth when she heard it, she almost did. She almost did! (109)

The presence of strong libidinal urges also is supported by the statement he makes to himself after he is reminded by the gift, presented at his forty-fifth birthday, by the nurse he employs.

Forty five. It is strange how little one changes. The psychologists are all wrong about puberty. Puberty changes nothing. This morning I woke with exactly the same cosmic sexual-religious longing I woke with when I was ten years old. Nothing changes but accidentals. Your toes rotate, shoeing more skin. Every molecule in your body has been replaced but you are exactly the same. (156-57)

This statement, in fact, gives us a glimpse into the plenitude of psychic and libidinal forces that characterize, as he likes to call himself, the bad catholic. By stating that except for accidental changes nothing changes, he exposes the inner reality of himself that, on the one hand, he has not matured and, on the other, he has not been able so far to rise above the pleasure principle of id.

His obsessive concern for sex is also corroborated by the lines of Don Giovanni, which he is extremely fond of reading. Don Giovanni is a story of a promiscuous young man who cajoles young ladies into having sexual intercourse and leaves them afterwards. Disrespectful of every social institution and traditions, Giovanni dies through the hands of a ghost of the father of the girl he had deflowered earlier.

Thomas More is a modern Don Giovanni in the sense that he, just like him, engages himself mainly, if not only, in the act of pleasure making with three girls he is in touch with. He disrespects other religion, which too is in parallel with Giovanni's demeanor. The only difference is that Giovanni was a mighty young man while Thom is physically frail and mentally unstable. His frequent chanting of the lines from Don

Giovanni shows that he in some way of other wants to imitate and, if possible, emulate the mythical Spanish hero.

Willingness for Sublimation

Even though Thomas may appear, particularly because of his aforementioned sexual interaction of with a number of girls, to be extremely sex-obsessed character, he does almost every possible thing to stay away from the sex and divert that energy towards the work of scientific innovation. On the contrary, he attempts to channel the libidinal desires into his scientific career. Getting tired of the carnal relationship with the opposite sex, he at one point of the novel decides-

No; No girls! No more lewd thoughts! No more lusting after my neighbor's wives and daughters! No hankering after strange women! No more humbug! No more great vaulting lewd daytime longings, no whispering into pretty ears, no more assignations in closets, no more night adventures in bunkers and sand traps, no more inviting Texas girls out into glooming![...] I am Thomas More. (176)

His growing abhorrence with the promiscuous lifestyle, as described in the passage quoted above, reflects his genuine willingness for sublimation of the libidinal urges into the prestigious scientific career. He does not want to be a sluggish and aimless womanizer who would make merry in deflowering the maidens. He wants to be a man with a clear goal in his mind and concrete plan to achieve it. He wants to be a man with mission, a mission which would put, in his opinion, the escalating mental disorder of the general people back into normal, a mission that would ensure the safety of all the Americans.

Thomas More's willingness to sublimate the cravings is reflected in the way he seeks to emulate this exemplary forebear Sir Thomas More. He was the man of

great learning, scholarship and dedication who had championed different disciplines of those days. He was a genius who wrote a number of scholarly works. His fame, while he was alive and even many years after death, was unmatched in the continent. He was the “dearest, noblest, merriest of Englishmen” (23). Thomas the scientist, however, notices the significant difference: “My contribution, I hasten to add, was in the realm of science not sanctity” (23).

What he intends to imitate and, if possible emulate, the forebear is the way he managed to channel the fundamental drives into scholarly learning and findings: “Why can’t I follow More’s example, love myself less, God and my fellowmen more, and leave whiskey and women alone” (23). Following sir Thomas More’s example would involve, as the scientist in the making enumerates, leaving women and whiskey for good. This is in Freudian notion bidding farewell to the pleasure principle of Id. Satisfying bodily desires of hunger and sex is the first and foremost requirement of pleasure principle. Women stand for the desire for sexual gratification whereas whiskey represents the desire to quench the physical hunger and thirst. In order to bring about the successful operation of sublimation in him, the doctor has no other option but to abandon the desire for the gratification of physical needs first.

Secondly, Thomas must manipulate the desire, left unquenched and unaddressed by the pleasure principle, so that it would not deviate towards narcissism. Narcissism, as Freud puts it, is the obsessive adulation and admiration of oneself which undermines the existence and importance of other people to the eyes of the given person. Thus, the fact that one is able to check the pleasure principle of immediate gratification of instinctual impulses does not necessarily mean that he is able to sublimate. The desire may be deviated to be the impulse for the love of oneself or, it may not get an outlet in any form, which may later result in the person becoming

neurotic. The doctor, cognizant of these different contingencies, vows to “love myself less” (23).

The third, and probably the most important, factor in the successful occurrence of sublimation in the life of renaissance scholar was “love [for] god and ...fellowmen” (23). Sir Thomas More’s forte was theology. Therefore, he would definitely want to transform into the realm of science, into the world of physics rather than metaphysics.

Not only does Thomas More strive to sublimate the cravings into socially fruitful activity of scientific innovation, but he has also been supported by his abstinent wife in the process. Following the religion that stresses on the celibacy, she rarely engages herself in the pleasure giving act of making love with her husband. She is in a way successful to divert her libido into the spiritual realm of religion. That’s why Mr. More thinks her to be spoiled by ‘spiritual book’ and a ‘heathen Englishman’, which implies that the person in question is not a Christian.

However, Doris is unsuccessful in transforming the mental makeup of her husband. She is unable to orient her husband towards spiritual awakening. It is what leads Doris to enunciate this sentence: “you don’t understand the purely spiritual relationship”; because she knows her husband, caught in the bond of material world, is never able to go beyond the epidermis of the objects. He, in other words, is not able to go beyond the body of his wife towards her spiritual thinking. As a result, he fails to understand her and hers spiritual orientation.

The fact that Doris wanted her husband to sublimate his cravings from earthly lowliness is also supported by her actions. She leaves or bequeaths Tom a sum of “forty thousand shares of R.I. Reynold stock she inherited from her father” (12). She leaves such a huge amount of shares to her mentally unstable husband not because she has no sense of financial transaction: Anyone who invests in share market is

cognizant of financial matters. But she leaves that great a sum of shares to him in order to show that she has no concern for material and monetary matter. Just like she has abandoned her husband and sexual intercourse though they were part and parcel of her life beforehand, so she no longer cares of monetary matters though people may find it to be essential to run the life. The implication of the action may be that as long as human being are not able to forsake their association with monetary, sensual, material and worldly things, they cannot channel their instinctual urges to attain higher goals.

It is not only Doris but also Ellen who backs the ailed doctor to give final touch to his invention. She regards the doctor so highly that, despite knowing that doctor is mentally unstable and often succumbs to “suffering, night sweats, and morning terrors” (337), she accepts the job he offered there and then. She repeatedly extols his abilities to the sky and asks him to center his diffuse talent to bring about the scientific breakthrough.

By underlining his responsibility, she gets angry over his flirting with two other girls in the motel: “I don’t understand what is happening to you. You have so much to offer the world. There is so much that is fine in you. You’re a fine doctor. And God knows, if the world ever needed you, it needs you now. Yet all you want is live here in this motel with three women for months on end” (345). After learning that he intends to spend time with voluptuous girls in the motel than doing research on the laboratory to make improvements in the lapsomerer, she becomes furious and vents her anger at her employer.

Thus, the doctor is well supported by the persons he is in contact with for the occurrence of the sublimation in him. But, is there a remedy for a person who fails to recognize one’s own virtue?

Failure of sublimation

Despite his incessant efforts at sublimating the psychic and sexual energy into the scientific innovation and being well-backed by his fellowmen, Doctor Thomas More is unsuccessful in every possible way to channel those urges into the scientific discovery. As Sigmund Freud has noted, cultural sublimation of fundamental drives is not always a conscious and successful process. On the contrary, it is complex, varied and largely unconscious process which only a handful of human beings are able to undergo in their lifetime. Thomas More, with the best will in the world, is unable to curve his carvings towards the socially acceptable outlets.

The first reason which debars the psychiatrist from realizing the experience of sublimation is the overbearing presence of sexual desires in him. So strong are the desires in the doctor that he does not spare the nurse who comes to serve him in the hospital. He concedes that the longings and cravings in his heart do not let him ruminate over other useful ideas. They, contrarily, obsess him to satiate those cravings and instigate for the immediate gratification. Led by the pleasure principle, he is never able to forsake the longings for carnal desires, for alone channeling them towards higher goals.

Sublimation in Freudian formulation basically means becoming celibate and transforming the energy that would turn libidinal to higher, possibly religious, goals. However, Thomas More hardly ever, to put it mildly, thinks of going celibate, for alone channeling it to his scientific career: In place of encouraging his wife Doris towards following and practicing the life of celibacy, Thomas rebukes his wife when she asks him to pursue the celibate and moral life. He asserts that he has 'conjugal rights' over her when she consciously attempts to avoid the physical union. Instead of being thankful to Doris for not perturbing him in his academic and scientific pursuit,

he expresses furor to her for not letting him satisfy his carnal desires through her alluring, plump body.

Thomas neither thinks of transforming his urges into something higher nor does he let his wife do it. When she strives to do so, he finds her ruined. As he says: “My poor wife, Doris was ruined by books, by books and a heathen Englishman, not by dirty books but by clean books, not by depraved books but by spiritual books” (64).

Doris turned religions while Thomas did not. And, it would have been natural on his part to want to have coitus with his wife had he not declared himself to be the catholic Einstein, the genius who is able to see “into the hidden causes of things and erects simple hypotheses to account for the glut of everyday events.” It is, however, self-contradictory on his part to want, on the one hand, to shut himself off from the outer world to break through the scientific discovery and, on the other, assert conjugal rights over the wife for the “joyous encounter” (66).

She labels him to be a man of “collapsed morality” and makes him feel “ashamed” (68). She even compares him to the “Polack miner coming up out of the earth every night with no thoughts but to fill his belly and hump his wife.” But even after being debased by own wife to the state of more or less an animal, he in no way thinks of, as did the Indian scholar Tulasi Das, abandoning sensual life for good, but resorts to other girls for quenching the carnal thirst.

The second reason that leads the doctor towards failure is the lack of strong resolution. More only toys with the idea of curbing these strong urges but does not seriously ruminates over. In a sense, he simply daydreams of veering the urges but never initiates an action to materialize it. He knows that he is a man of strong urges but, in place of curbing, he moves ahead to gratify it. It is precisely the reason that

accounts for his failure whereas, as he acknowledges, his imaginary icon was able to sublimate it: “Sir Thomas was right, of course, and I am wrong”.

Fond of comparing himself with the Renaissance scholar Sir Thomas More, Dr Tom perceives some significant differences in between them that account for the failure of the occurrence of cultural sublimation in him. “Sir Thomas More was merry in life and death and he loved and was loved by everyone, even his executioner, with whom he cracked jokes. By contrast, I am possessed by the terror and desire and live a solitary life” (23). The implication of the latter sentence is that the presence of overbearing sexuality, which abounds in him, debars him from elevating himself to achieve higher social goals.

The main reason for the failure of the occurrence of sublimation in the purported genius is that he does not give heed to the discipline into which he wants to make his career. His trouble lies not in the kind of career he chooses but in the manner with which he approaches his field of interest. Though he makes it appear to both the readers and the other character in the novel that he is interested in the field of science from the bottom of his heart, his interest in reality is a façade that he shows not in order to make some major breakthrough but to impress other people into believing that he indeed is a man of letters and thereby to win the heart of girls. Nothing captivates his attention and interest so thoroughly than the thought of making back to back love with the three girls in the motel. Pointing at his failure, a madman says: “You want to know your trouble? You don’t love God, you love pussy” (46).

The fourth reason is that he is not ready to sacrifice anything in his life. As a man with strong will power, he had to be logically ready to sacrifice anything to achieve the targeted goals. But, Thomas More throughout his life has never understood the meaning of the term sacrifice, nor has he ever practiced it. He knows

only the single principle of being happy: gratify the physical sensations and indulge himself into drinking fizzes of whiskey. As he says: "My life is longing, longings for women, for the Nobel Prize, for the hot bosky bite of bourbon whiskey, and other great heart wrenching longings that have no name"(23).

He is a perfect example to the Freudian notion, expressed in the essay "Creative Writers and Day Dreaming", that we can discover in some corner or other the lady for whom a man "performs all his heroic deeds and at whose feet all his triumphs are laid" (Adams, 714). His intention is not to save the world but to accumulate overwhelming fame and praise and possibly to win the heart of the girls out of admiration. At the suggestion that he should leave the life based on the bestial satisfaction of the libido, he says: "What does a man live for but to have a girl, use his mind, practice his trade, drink a drink, read a book..." (336). His reluctance to abandon the pleasure emanating from the satisfaction of carnal desire results in the failure of sublimation.

The fifth and final reason behind the failure is his ambition, arrogance and self-centeredness. Thomas More is highly ambitious scientist who bothers less about the rest of the world than the little world he is in contact with. Tom More is a man with a rather high regards for his singular abilities; it should come as no surprise that early on he announces that he is a "genius"(11). Even before that he confesses "imagining the scene in [his] Director's office the day [his] Nobel Prize is awarded":

I enter. The secretaries blush. My colleagues horse around. The Director breaks out the champagne and paper cups (like Houston Control after the moon landing). 'Hats off, gentlemen!' cries the Director in his best derisive style (from him the highest accolade). 'A toast to our local Pasteur! No, rather the new Copernicus! The latter-day Archimedes who found the

place to insert his lever and turn the world not upside down but right side up!' (7)

Tom daydreams of this scene at the time when he has not even got the scholarship in the university. Such holier-than-thou attitude, held without analyzing the ground reality, leads him towards the failure.

His deeply held conviction that the world would come to an unexpected, unanticipated apocalypses bothers him less than the fact that he would not be able to publish what he thinks to be the sensational and groundbreaking article in some respected scientific magazine and thereby earning not only the Nobel Prize but the status of the “latter-day Archimedes” (7): “Let me confess that what worries me most is that the catastrophe will overtake us before my scientific article is published and so before my discovery can create a sensation in the scientific world” (8).

Thomas, engrossed completely by the feelings of self-centeredness, hardly ever expresses concern over anything except for the little world he is in contact with. He is hardly able to think something else than the three girls-Ellen, Moira and Lola. Paranoiac because of the excessive sexual wishes, he neither intends, nor is able, to go beyond his microcosmic world to reflect upon the rest of the humanity and the world. “Thoughts about coming catastrophe and the three girls cause my scalp to tingle with a peculiar emotion.” (7)

Why would such a self-centered and arrogant person labor for the betterment of the humanity and the world at the cost of the happiness that he gets while indulging himself in the realm of wild passion?

A Failed Genius

The analysis of the character of the protagonist so far has probably made it obvious that Tom wants to prove himself the man with some singular and unique

abilities. Such a genius and, if we are to believe what he writes, quick-witted scientist can never make wrong calculation while forecasting states of the land and its inhabitants in the future. The genius, as he is fond of calling himself, makes a prophecy about the devastating apocalypses in such a confident manner that it would lead anybody in the world into believing the veracity of his narration:

There is a clearer and more present danger, however. I have reason to believe that within the next two hours an unprecedented fallout of noxious particles will settle hereabouts and perhaps in other places as well. It is a catastrophe whose cause and effects-and prevention-are known only to me.

The effects of the evil particles are psychic rather than physical. (5)

There is every likelihood that chaos is about to occur, for some newly demonized denizen may even cause a nuclear explosion by beaming one of the nearby heavy salt domes. Tom therefore takes to the high ground. After two hours, he sees a "yellow lens-shaped cloud" and hears gunfire, sure signs of the apocalypse. But by now he is so stupefied that he falls asleep, to dream especially of the past three days and additionally of the past twenty years.

However, in a wondrously ironic reversal, the apocalypse which Thomas More has both feared and prophesied, fails to occur. When he awakens-in less than ten minutes-he discovers that nothing much has happened. His dream-of world destruction or, if not that, world salvation through his unique agency-has been just that, only a dream that lacks any objective reality. Thus, his first failure as a genius consists in not being able to make objective and trustworthy prediction.

His second failure lies in the fact that he is not able to invent the machine that can cure the malaise. Once Tom had developed a working model of his machine, he began to perform diagnoses, to accumulate the data to convince others that his

machine did what he said it did: "prove the very secrets of the soul, diagnose the maladies that poison the wellsprings of man's hope" (7), the maladies that an empiricist might term "electrical malfunctions" (51). He observed that when he informed a patient of his diagnosis the patient immediately showed improvement, albeit only temporarily: . . . the best I could do in those days was a kind of 'historical therapy,' as I called it: a recapture of the past and one's self' (43). That is to say, like a conventional psychotherapist he 'took history," then encouraged the patient to talk, helped him to name his own condition. But Tom yearned to use his machine to make permanent cures, to penetrate beyond a patient's psychology, in order to affect the organic source of mental disturbance, thus ridding psychotherapy of the embarrassing need to rely upon a patient's will. Such an achievement would be Tom's Archimedean lever. Realizing the failure after several attempts, he expresses his wish: "If only my lapsometer could treat as well as diagnose . . ." (165). In the instance, he fails to emulate the Archimedean lever with his lapsometer. Thus, his hope of becoming the "latter-day Archimedes" is shattered asunder.

His medical device is dysfunctional not only in the sense that it is not able to heal but also in the sense that it cannot detect the reason behind it. The velocity of the molecules inside the body quickens because of excessively strong feelings. This inability in the machine to distinguish between the real anxiety and ecstatic feelings creates confusion in the doctor's mind. When Tom and Ellen then go to bed, he notes that she displays both of the aberrant unselfconscious behaviors that he has observed in his patients, mechanistic mental processing and uninhibited sexual activity. Since he does not yet know the cause of these behaviors or know of the conspiracy responsible for the cause, he cannot realize that his wife and his patients have been

possessed by the demon Azazel. And, the confusion on the part of the doctor results in his failure.

To heal society is Tom's program: "If only my lapsometer could treat as well as diagnose . . ." (165). But society cannot be centered until the individuals who constitute society are centered. Tom should heed another voice that sometimes haunts his mind, "Physician, heal thyself" (11).

Tom speaks of Don Giovanni "being, in his opinion, a member of this company of sexual geniuses" (220), modestly implying that he too is a member of said body. Instead of channeling his sexual urges into the civilizationally fruitful activities, the ailing doctor seeks the means of discharge. He gives heed to the unwitting but affectionate touch of the nurse than the problem of the patient in examination. He prefers 'fornicating' a number of women than laboring in the laboratory to make groundbreaking scientific discovery. Tom, then, is no genius, even though he keeps alluding to John Locke: "Small, disconnected facts, if you take note of them, have away of becoming connected." (67)

IV. Conclusion

This research work analyzes the behavior of the protagonist of the novel in the light of the Freudian theoretical proposition of sublimation. As such, it does not present the behavior of the other character and the behavior of the protagonist himself which the researcher found impertinent to the analytical tool. Nor does it deal with, the protagonist Thomas More also being the protagonist of other Percy's novels such as *Thanatos Syndrome*, the events the doctor experiences and the issues he deals with outside the plot of this novel.

The dissertation first establishes the rationale behind the application of the psychoanalytical theory of sublimation to the analysis of the novel. Its necessity is proven, for one thing, by the fact that the protagonist himself is a psychiatrist who believes psychological understanding of the individuals to be the prerequisite for the understanding of human being as a whole. For other, the traumatic and troubled mental state of the protagonist and the presentation of psychological complexities as the recurring subject and the motif of the novel necessitate the approach to be applied.

The conclusion of this research writing is dependent upon three major premises: that the protagonist of the novel possesses psychic energy; that he has the genuine willingness and is well supported by other character in the novel to redirect aforesaid libidinal desires into socially valuable scientific work; and that he is unable to sublimate it. As a natural outcome of these syllogistically drawn premises, the claim that has been made is that the protagonist's adventure into innovative scientific work ends in failure.

In the first part of this research writing, the protagonist Thomas More is established as the reservoir of dynamic energy, continuously seeking a means of discharge. The presence and profundity of More's psychic energy is observable in a

number love and lust affairs into which Tom indulges himself. Particularly, his desperate attempts of making love with Moira in the deserted motel, the unsuccessful attempt of making love with of Lola in the bunker, doom-inviting but extremely physically satisfying coitus with Doris and unanticipated marriage with Ellen Oglethorpe in a way or other highlight the sexuality of the narrator of the novel.

After positing that he is the man with the plenitude of psychic energy, the willingness of Tom More for sublimation is elaborately discussed under the rubric “Willingness for Sublimation.” Thomas gives the impression that he is not interested in, and attempts whenever possible to refrain from, overt sexual activity for most, if not all, of his life. The statements made by Doris and Ellen in the course of the development of the story also provide the ailing doctor impetus to channel his cravings for the sake of the betterment the doctor himself and the humanity as a whole. The constant invocation of Renaissance scholar Thomas More as his iconic figure also reinforces the proposition that he has the genuine willingness for sublimation.

However, he fails to undergo the rare psychological experience of sublimation owing to a number of reasons. First, the presence of overbearing libidinal impulses that cannot be curbed debar the protagonist from realizing sublimation. In other words, either he is unable or does not want to curb the pleasure principle of id in the first place. Secondly, even if he is able to divert the energy, he channels it not towards the scientific research but towards the narcissistic admiration of himself. As a result, he turns either narcissistic or, in its absence, neurotic because of the perpetual suppression. Thirdly, he lacks the genuine willingness for sublimation. The willingness he exhibits is bogus, pretended and facade.

Because of the failure of sublimation, the scientist is unsuccessful in all of his scientific undertakings. For instance, the apocalypse which Thomas More had both feared and prophesied fails to occur. Likewise, the machine that, he believes, can detect and cure the electrical malfunctioning in human mind fails to accomplish the latter task. And even while making a diagnosis, it cannot trace down the reason behind it.

Thus, the genius transpires to be decentered genius, one who is estranged from his own attainable goals. Muddled in the different spheres of life such as love, pleasure and sex, Tom proves to be the diffuse genius; that is no genius at all.

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