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The Dream Screen in *The Moviegoer*: A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Text.

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Abstract

The research explores the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis in Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*. It studies the dream screen of the protagonist, Binx Bolling in which he shows strange kind of abnormal activities. Obsessed with the lack, i.e. the lack of mother, he indulges himself in different activities like recollecting the past events, frequently going to the movies, and always seeking the company of women. He directs himself to "the search" about which he himself doesn't know. He always sees the present in relation with the past and always desires to go to the past. In the name of search he is escaping from the world. Finally he comes to realize that the past is unachievable and decides to go with 'everydayness', the present.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The present research work focuses on Walker Percy's first novel *The Moviegoer* in order to study the inner human psyche of an individual who is obsessed with the lack, confines himself in the worlds of psychic projection, and behaves abnormally with the people and, therefore, fails to relate with the world. The study examines the text from the Freudian psychoanalytic perspective which aims to show the repressed unconscious of an individual.

The novel, published in 1961, is regarded as a milestone in the development of philosophical novels in America. This novel received the National Book Award for fiction in 1962. Percy's *The Moviegoer*, one of the best novels he has ever written, firmly establishes him as one of the America's foremost novelist. In this novel there is a character, Binx Bolling, the protagonist of the novel, who narrates the story of the novel. Actually, he narrates his own past that occurred over a year in the past and comments on the other characters too. As a moviegoer, Binx Bolling frequently goes to the movies in the name of 'the search' but he is uncertain about the search to which he is heading for. He shows a kind of strange or abnormal behavior. Actually, he is a neurotic character who differs from other characters in manners and behaviors. He possesses some special characteristics of intelligence, knowledge, innocence, benevolence, cleverness, beauty or bravery which makes him different from other ordinary characters. In spite of these qualities Binx is suffering from some internal psychological problems produced by some intense frustrations or by some lack which he had experienced in the past.

Binx Bolling is a young bachelor stockbroker in New Orleans. He is a scion of old Louisiana family. When he was ten, his father got killed in the battle for Crete in 1941. After the death of his father, his mother left him with his aunt to be raised. His mother married again and started a second family. As a teenager Binx lives with his aunt Emily Curter, who is the personification of 'everydayness', i.e. the strict social and moral laws and values of the society. There is another character named Kate Curter, who is the cousin of Binx and stepdaughter of the Aunt Emily. Kate Curter is also a neurotic character leading her lives knowingly or unknowingly towards misery, death, destruction from the very beginning. She seems to be preoccupied with death instincts. Her life instincts don't appear strong enough to defeat the death instincts which results in her abnormal activities. In the end of the novel, Binx and Kate get married. Here I am going to focus on Binx's character more than that of Kate's though they lie within the same category.

Walker Percy's Life and His Works

Before examining the various elements that make up the remarkable writing of Walker Percy, a brief survey of his biography is necessary. He was born in Birmingham, Alabama as a son of Leroy and Martha Percy on May 1916. His father was a successful lawyer in Birmingham. His childhood was unhappy because his father committed suicide when he was thirteen and his mother died in an accident two years later. He had two elder brothers, Phin and Roy. The three orphaned boys were sent to live with the father's cousin, William Alexander Percy, a writer himself in Greenville, Mississippi. This move seems to be the best happening in Walker Percy's life. The boy grew up surrounded by books, works of art and a piano that was never quiet.

Walker Percy studied Chemistry at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. After graduation from college he decided to enter medical school. Although his grades were not exceptional, he was accepted to the college of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University Medical School. In 1941, he graduated with honors and started an internship at Bellevue Hospital in New York. However, his internship was cut short due, because Percy contracted tuberculosis while treating tuberculosis patients. Later on he returned to Columbia as teacher. After a relapse of the tuberculosis, he was forced to retire from medicine permanently just after three short years.

Walker Percy married Mary Bernice Townsend, a medical technician on 7th November 1946. He and his family returned to the south. First, he and his wife lived in New Orleans. Later they moved to Covington, Louisiana, where they raised two daughters, Ann Boyd and Mary Pratt.

Walker Percy began a writing career, using two primary genres: novels, six of which would be published, and philosophical essays. Out of Percy's six novels, three received numerous honors and awards. His first novel *The Moviegoer* (1961) received the National Book Award for fiction in 1962. His novel *Love in the Ruins* (1971) was awarded the National Catholic Book Award in 1972. His fifth novel *The Second Coming* (1980) received the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, a National Book Critics Circle Citation, An American Book Award Nomination, and A Notable Book Citation from the American Library Association and a P.E.N./Faulkner Award. In addition, his other non-fictional work *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book* won the St. Louis Literary Award in 1986. He wrote for more than thirty years. He combined interesting fiction with

serious ideas in his writings. Most of his works deal with the nature of the universe and man's place in it. He died from cancer at the age of seventy four on May 10, 1990.

Percy believed that one of the fundamental experiences of human life was that of self-consciousness, that awkward sense of somehow not fitting into the universe. In a famous essay, Percy wrote of "The Man on the Train", the typical modern man who feels alternately bored and anxious in the grip of nothingness. Another image he used in his writings was of the Wednesday afternoon at four o'clock feeling: a blankness or lostness that often overcomes us. In fact Percy is trying to show the internal human psychology in his works. He was influenced a little bit by the existential thinkers too. In some of his works we can see the existential issues which shows an individual who struggles for placing himself in the universe.

During the bedridden time, due to tuberculosis Percy read the writings of Camus, Kierkegaard, Freud and also the works by catholic thinkers, especially St. Thomas Aquinas. Shortly after, in his mid-thirties, he made three major decisions: to become a full time writer, to marry, and to become a catholic. As he was a seeker in the truest sense of the word, Carl E. Olson remarks, "the quest taken up in his writing would be to 'diagnose' the malaise", -the pain of loss as he defines in *The Moviegoer*, "the emptiness of spirit and darkness of heart so prevalent in the twentieth century, especially reflected in the fact that modern man is a stranger to himself" (3).

In his novels the issue is focused on sexuality, and the problem, as expressed in his fiction, is how to square sexual desire with traditional ideas of love and sex. What used to be regarded as sin and perversion is now acceptable to, even sanctioned by, church and state. The traditional concept of love is too idealistic to prove Percy's

protagonist with satisfactory pattern of behavior. "Inevitably his novels involve the setting of the problem and the working out of a solution, the protagonist wrestling with his psychological confusion, then, finally creating for himself a synthesis in which love and lust – giving and taking – are appropriately balanced" (Stuckey 681).

Walker Percy's first novel *The Moviegoer* (1961), concludes with the protagonist, Binx Bolling, a lusty bachelor, failing in his latest sexual escapade and marrying a young woman of his own class, partly out of affection, but also because they share a sense of experienced responsibility. This novel shows the psycho-sexual complication of the protagonist who projects himself in movie-watching, money-making, and seeking the company of women. Percy's second novel the *Last Gentleman* (1966), in which the protagonist suffers from emotional detachment (which Percy sees as the chief modern malady), cures himself through his personal devotion to a dying youth and in turn helps to cure a confused young woman and her cynical older brother.

The third novel *Love in the Ruins* (1971) is set in the future "at a time near the end of the world", deals with the collapse of modern technology and concludes with the responsible marriage of the protagonist who tries to save his doomed world but failing that, gives himself over to whiskey and lust for three beautiful women. At the novel's close he marries the most responsible woman and begins to live a simple, natural, and properly useful life in the shadow of the remnants of the Old Catholic church.

In his fourth novel *Lancelot* (1977), the pessimism is deeper, the solution more tenuous. The hero, at first tolerates of his wife's sexual infidelity, finally kills her and her lover, is confined to a mental institution, is 'cured' and then released into the world. For a time, he takes on responsibility for a young woman who has been raped and maimed by a

gang of thugs, but is rebuffed by her in the language of radical feminism. This protagonist, then, stands alone against a world shown to be corrupt beyond redemption. A slight ray of final hope is that the woman may eventually join him in his exile.

His fifth novel *The Second Coming* (1980) has the familiar problem and resolution. Will Barrett's death – life existence is resolved by lusty love affair with a schizophrenic girl, and Barrett, a non-believer, nevertheless concludes that the girl 'a gift' must be a sign of the Lord 'the giver'. Percy's last novel *The Thanatos Syndrome* (1987) concerns the government's plan to build a utopia in the state of Louisiana. The public – to the dismay of the ruling class – is uncooperative and becomes increasingly restless and unhappy, refusing to adapt to the goals of the engineers. To 'ease' the growing crisis the authorities introduced a chemical solution into the area's water supply. This solution causes individual loss of identity and free will, while it facilitates docile acceptance of government plans to 'improve the quality of life'.

Literature Review

Walker Percy has become an important writer in the last twelve years on the basis of three major award-winning novels, and he is beginning to attract a fair amount of critical attention. His remarkable first novel, *The Moviegoer* has drawn the attention of numerous critics, which was largely ignored at first by reviewers until it won the National Book Award for fiction in 1962. Approximately a dozen of long articles on his works have appeared in critical and scholarly journals. Taking the novel *The Moviegoer* as one of the most profound novels ever written, Stephen Amidson says, "Percy traces with unforgettable precision an individual souls passage through the world. His Binx is on the search that proves every bit as urgent as that of Bunyan's Pilgrim, Christian as he looks

for a way of living that helps him avoid being 'sunk in everydayness'" (5). In addition, some critics focus on the issue of feminism in the novel, some focus on the religious aspects of the novel and some critics focus on the existential issue of the novel. So, here, I would like to categorize these criticisms into three categories: feminist, existential, and religious.

Actually Percy's portrayal of women has in recent years attracted some feminist criticism. Feminist critics, especially, try to show the relationship between man and woman, the role and the status of the female characters in the novel. Regarding this issue Gary Ciuba writes: "although Percy's typically male seekers seem more open to discovering their life in God, the women they have loved are never clearly shown to have come as far in their wayfaring", she adds, "even the 'women of faith' who do manage to make it to the end never achieve a religious understanding that receives the same affirmation in the novel as the spiritual vision of Binx" (21). In Ciuba's analysis, the women in Percy's fiction never participate as fully in the spiritual awakening as do the men, and in light of the prevailing concerns of the novel, are thereby relegated to the secondary roles'.

Similarly Eddie Dupuy, though focusing his analysis more on the secular, like Ciuba, sees the supportive role for the female characters: "they help the male protagonists find their way back to the ordinary world" (60). Dupuy goes on to assign the role of double for the major female character in *The Moviegoer* but asserts: "despite this doubling... the male perspective dominates almost exclusively". The "transcendence/immanence continuum" tends to divide "along gender lines" (60).

Joseph Campbell, the scholar and compiler of world mythologies, has described the traditional and widespread association of the female with the earth and the material (and the immanent), and the male with the sun and the abstract (and the transcendent). This elevation of the male into the sphere of the transcendent, the philosophical, and the godly, has been the staple of feminist criticism since the 1960s. Early feminist criticized the banishment of women to the kitchen and domestic duties, where their intellectual outlets were restricted to the culinary (connected with cooking and food) and the literary talents to the epistolary (written or expressed in the form of letters). Likewise Timothy K. Nixon writes:

Women in [Percy's] novels are denied the sovereignty which the male protagonist achieves... whether Percy made a conscious choice in writing fiction that is male-centered or not, there is an exclusionary nature to this novel. Female characters in Percy's writings are inspirations or hindrances to male characters searching for truth; they are not spiritual questers themselves. One can see, then that this limitation of female character's roles can and does limit, or even exclude female readers from the intended audience of *The Moviegoer*. (50)

Nixon shows the exclusionary nature of the writer in *The Moviegoer* and she also shows the woman as a supportive part of the male to achieve their goal. She presents a conventionally feminist reading of Kate's role as helpless and serving only as inspiration for Binx's enlightenment, a distinctly ancillary role to Binx's as Christian wayfarer.

As the novel emerged after the World War II, it bears the post-modern pangs. There is nothingness, meaninglessness, and despair in this period, however, the post-

modern man accepts these things as inevitable phenomenon. He struggles hard to establish himself in the displaced world. Regarding this issue, Richard Pindell views the novel's hero, Binx Bolling's struggle as existential and he writes:

In the course of *The moviegoer* he awakens to the possibility of a search for how he can best place himself in the world. "To become aware of the possibility of a search", he notes, formulating the burden of O'Connor's statements in other terms, "is to be unto something. Not to be into something is to be in despair". Brought alive by his research and learning along the way in trust and patience to patience the arts of openness and to promote kindness, he becomes by the books end a man like Kierkegaard's 'Knight of Faith' which steadfastly involved in the need to radiate the truth of his relationship with the world and his connection with being.
(219)

Lois Parkinson Zamora, in *The American Journals of Semiotics* finds the similarity between Binx in *The Moviegoer* and Toto in *La Traicion de Rita Hayworth*. He remarks: "Both Binx and Toto are romantics, alienated from their societies and longing for an unattainable realm which life can not provide but which the movies can, and both are described in these terms" (par. 11). He further comments on the protagonist of *The Moviegoer* like this:

He is a moviegoer though of course he doesn't go the movies. The moviegoer then is one who uses art to mediate between desire and reality, one for whom life should imitate the ideal realm of art. The 'Moviegoer' must inevitably feel the loss of a world that might be but never will be, a

world realized only in art which is distanced from reality, conventional and stylized rather than faithfully mimetic. (11)

Critics who make the religious interpretation argue about the spiritual quest of the protagonist. They believe that Percy's novel has got the religious theme. The character of the Percy's novel is nothing but the quester of God, which is the spiritual salvation.

Regarding this issue Terrye Newkirk writes:

Binx hesitates to say he is searching for God because he has no clear idea, as yet, of who God is; he can only intuit God is not. Binx doesn't take the kataphatic path, the way of proofs and signs, by affirming what he knows of God; he follows instead the apophatic path of negation. The via negativa which leads to God by way of what St. John of the cross calls 'the night of faith'. Like John, Binx can only assert that God is "not this, nor this, nor this". He is incapable of domesticating mystery, as his mother seems to do; he finds embarrassing the "pretty darn enduring" values of Nell and Eddie Lovell; most difficult, he must finally reject the southern stoicism of aunt Emily, not because it is false, but because it isn't sufficiently true. When Emily asks him what he believes in, he can not answer: "what do you love? What do you live by? I am silent". (179)

According to him, it is typical of certain stages of the negative way that even intellectual knowledge of God is obliterated. One clings to God by a kind of naked faith which is by no means a "blessed assurance". It is rather a dry, obscure, but persistent conviction of the possibility of God.

But in this dissertation, the novel will be viewed as Binx's search and other abnormal activities because of his obsession and the feeling of lack, on which issue no critic has ever talked, studied and analyzed before. So, the protagonist of the play will be proposed and analyzed as strange and obsessive character that shows different kind of abnormal activities such as, always recollecting the past events, always indulging himself in movie-watching and always seeking the company of women especially his secretaries. And this issue is totally different from other interpretation.

This study is divided into four different chapters. The first chapter will be a general introduction to the text and the writer as well. Theories dealing with factors of personality disorder on the basis of psychoanalysis especially of Sigmund Freud will be dealt in the second chapter. The chapter third will be the application of Freud's theory upon the text. In the fourth chapter, conclusion will try to sum up the analysis done in earlier chapters. So, all the chapters will attempt to revolve around to unveil the obsessive and abnormal behavior of the protagonist of the novel, Binx Bolling.

Chapter Two

Theoretical framework of Psychoanalysis

Introduction

Emerged as a therapeutic technique for the treatment of hysteria and neurosis, psychoanalysis generally deals with the state of mind and structure of personality of the individual. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* writes it as: '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.' If we go to the history of psychoanalysis, this approach emerged in the early decades of 19th century. Actually, it came as a part of romantic replacement of earlier mimetic and pragmatic views by an expressive view of literature. But since 1920s, this psychological literary criticism has come to be psychoanalytic criticism whose premises and procedures were established by the Austrian psychiatrist and neurologist Sigmund Freud. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis has become the most influential personality theory of modern era. He concentrates on "understanding the forces at work in personality and the internal structures which channel and directs them" (Guerin 129). But in this process he gives emphasis on sexual motivations in development of personality which has made his followers disagree with him.

Through the means of psychoanalysis we become able to understand the inner human sentiments and feelings. The structure of human mind is very complex due to the different relations of human beings with other human beings and with the whole world. Human beings are within the social and cultural web. Freud asserts that the study of human psychology can provide a strong support for understanding personal and social

relationships. According to Freud, human actions are motivated by psychological forces over which we have very limited control. He puts forward the ideas of conscious, subconscious and unconscious aspects of human psyche. His underlying assumption is that when some wish, fear, memory or desire is difficult to face, we may try to cope with it by repressing it, i.e., eliminating it from the conscious mind. But this doesn't make it go away: it remains alive in the unconscious, like radioactive matter buried beneath the ocean, and constantly seeks a way back into the conscious minds, always succeeding eventually.

As a result, these wishes and desires (infantile sexual wishes and other censored materials as Freud puts it) emerge only in disguised form in dreams, language, tongue slip, creative activities, neurotic behaviors and other abnormal activities. But Freud says that if we repress our desire too much that might cause neurosis. It is an element of creation as well as a cause of our unhappiness. So to keep our civilization on, to keep ourselves happy, we have to express those desires through socially acceptable means and only then our society moves on harmoniously.

For Freud, like an iceberg, human mind is so structured that its great weight and destiny lie beneath the surface. The unconscious plays vital role in the process of creativity. He focuses more on the ways in which author's creative worth appeals to reader's repressed wishes and fancies. Most conscious processes are conscious for only a short period, quite soon they become latent. Though they can easily become conscious again. Man suffers from agitation, frustration, and inner mental conflicts, which is a great challenge of modern conflicts, which is a great challenge of modern civilization. Psychological problems of human beings are immensely increasing in the modern world.

Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) became a landmark in the history of psychoanalytical method. The reputed scholar R. S. Woodworth notes: 'sexual difficulties and conflicts in the causation of any neurosis, hostility motives, and ambivalence (love and hate for the same person) also came to light but were regarded as arising from frustration of sex desires' (65). He says that neurosis is caused because of the sexual difficulties and conflicts. All human behaviors are motivated ultimately by what we would call sexuality. Freud's major premise is that most of the individual's mental processes are unconscious. He designates the prime psychic force as libido or sexual energy. He further says that because of the powerful social taboos attached to certain sexual impulses, many of our desires and memories are repressed.

There is a notion that a work of literature is co-related with its author's distinctive mental and emotional traits. John Keble, in his book '*On the Healing Power of Poetry*', writes: "poetry is the indirect expression... of some overpowering emotion, or ruling taste, feeling, the direct indulgence which is somehow repressed" (54). Such impression is imposed by the author's feelings and sentiments. The conflict between the need for expression and the compulsion to repress self revelation is resolved by the poet's ability to give healing relief to secret mental emotion.

Structure of Mind in Psychoanalysis

According to Freud, human psyche has three parts namely the Id, the Ego, and the Super Ego and these three levels of personality roughly corresponding to the unconscious, the consciousness (conscience) and the subconscious. Their harmonious relationship and efficiency determines the type of personality. While talking about three components of human personality, Guerin asserts that the Id, the primary source of all

psychic energy, works also as "the storehouse of all instincts, wishes, and desires" (129). It functions to fulfill the primordial life principle, which in Freud's terminology is called 'pleasure principle'. Id represents the world of subjective experience, and follows an unyielding pressure for tension reduction. Its function is "to gratify our instincts of pleasure without any regard for social conventions, legal ethics or morality" (130). Unchecked, it will lead us to any length of neurosis or even neurotic disorder to satisfy its impulses for pleasure. Safety for the self and for others does not lie in the province of the Id. Its concern is only for the gratification of instincts, whatever its effects may be. Naturally the Id knows "no values, no good and evil, no morality... so, it is lawless, asocial, and amoral also" (130).

The other psychic agency, the Ego, protects an individual and society from the dangerous potentialities of the Id. This component of personality is rational and is the governing agent of psyche. The Ego is the executive of personality which operates the cognitive and the intellectual functions of a person. It lacks the strong vitality of the Id; nevertheless, it regulates the instinctual drives of the Id, so that they may be released in non-destructive behavioral patterns. The Ego is the channel which is concerned with "discovering the most favorable and least perilous methods of obtaining satisfaction taking the Id instincts, demands and realities of the external world into account" (131).

Another component of personality, the Superego, represents the dictations and behavioral expectations of society. This is the moral censoring agency, the repository of conscience and pride, which primarily functions to protect society. Acting either directly or through the ego, the superego serves to repress or inhibit the drives of the Id to block off and thrust back into the unconscious and those impulses towards pleasure that society

regards as unacceptable such as overt aggression, sexual passion, and Oedipal instincts. The superego may bring fresh needs, but its chief function remains the limitation of satisfaction. In his view "superego develops in childhood from the influence of parents and other members of family, in terms of punishment for what society considers being bad behavior and reward for what society considers good" (131).

If one of the three components of personality gets a chance to dominate other, the Id will make us devils; that the superego will have made us behave as angels, or if worse as creatures of absolute social conformity; and that it remains for the ego to keep us healthy human beings by maintaining a balance between these two opposing forces.

Thus, it can be said that the Id is dominated by the pleasure principle, the Ego by the reality principle, and the Superego by the morality principle. The Ego is only the psychic agency which can create a balance between the Id and the Superego. Hence, personality is the result of the ego's efficiency, a balance created by controlling the Id and the Superego.

Freud further talks about the forces at work in human beings. He recognizes two fundamental forces – Eros and Thanatos. The first one denotes the force of 'life' and the other denotes the force of 'death' in Greek Mythology. These two psychic energies are innate and unlearned. Previously, Freud emphasizes only on Eros which is the life instincts in human life. In psychoanalysis, Freud presents two basic modes of thinking namely primary and secondary process. Primary process is directly related to life instincts or pleasure principle and secondary process belongs to reality principle or ego.

The instincts of Eros are better known as love or sex or life instinct. Human body seeks to fulfill physiological needs such as hunger, thirst, breathing and affection. In

Freudian psychoanalysis, the most motivating force of life is libido. It means the energy of sex motive. Sex energy is the creative and intellectual source of life instinct. Freud uses sex in broad sense, it is not only coition, and it represents love, tenderness and sympathy that bring all human beings in close contact. Freud writes, "The concept of sexuality and at the same time of sexual instincts has to be extended so as to cover many things which could not be classed under the reproductive function" (45).

Death instinct, Thanatos, is a vital force of living organism. Every organism follows its own path to death. The feelings and behaviors of human being, therefore, somehow, reveal death instinct. The aggressive behavior, destructive will and hostility motive manifest in death instinct. Freud has given more emphasis on hostility and aggressiveness of human behavior.

Life and death instincts are closely attached to each other. Some traits of death instincts and life instincts are interrelated and inseparable. Pleasure and pain, love and hate, hostility and tenderness are motives of life and death, which seem mutually antagonistic but often these two are inseparably fused in human activities. It is called the ambivalence of instincts. It is often seen quarrelling and hurting in courtship. When the motive of life instinct dominates the death instinct, there is love, courtship, happy and prosperous life. On the contrary, when death instinct dominates the life instinct, there is aggression, hostility, pain and hate that lead the life towards death. In this context Freud presents his view

Another striking fact is that the life instincts have so much more contact without internal perception emerging as breakers of the peace and constantly producing tensions whose release is felt as pleasure while the

death instincts seems to do their work unobtrusively. The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts. It is true that it keeps watch upon stimuli from without which are regarded as dangers by both kinds of instincts, but it is more specially on guard against increases of stimulations from within, which would make a task of living more difficult. (57)

In fact, human nature is a bundle of contradictory principles. It becomes clear that the opposing action of the two basic instincts provide the different kinds of ebbs and flows in life.

Freudian Concept of Dream Interpretation

Freud believes that a dream is an escape-hatch or a safety-valve through which repressed desires, fears, or memories seek an outlet into the conscious mind. It's a means of wish-fulfillment of an individual. Freud in his book "*Interpretation of Dreams*", explored the dynamic role of unconscious mind and he described dreams as the 'royal road to the unconscious'. To Freud, dream represents disguised desires, wish fulfilling expressions of unconscious and unacceptable thoughts. It is a mental process which is meaningful, purposeful, and symbolic. In his early stage of dream analysis, he believed that dream is simply wish fulfillment of those wishes of Id and superego which couldn't be gratified in real life. And they are fulfilled in the sleeping state when the ego is in relaxed. All dreams represent rejected and repressed wishes.

Psychoanalysis was conceived as a system of technical procedures for the treatment of the psychoneuroses, and the analyses of dreams was first intended to facilitate psychotherapy. As a means of access to a little-suspected, inner world of mental

life, dreams is regarded as the regressive manifestations of the repressed past. Regarding this issue M.H.Abrams, in his book, *Glossary of Literary Terms* (7th ed.), writes:

Dreams and other neurotic symptoms, consists of the imagined or fantasized fulfillment of wishes that are either denied by reality or are prohibited by the social standards of morality and propriety. The forbidden, mainly sexual ("libidinal") wishes come into conflict with, and are repressed by, the "censor" (the internalized representative within each individual of the standards of the society) into the unconscious realm of the artist's mind, but are permitted by the censor to achieve a fantasized satisfaction in distorted forms which serve to disguise their real motives, and objects from the conscious mind. (248)

For Freud, the repressed desires and other censored materials are transformed into the dream images. And these images are particularly affected by three components, i. e., condensation, displacements, and symbolism. In condensation, a number of people, events, or meanings are combined and represented by a single image in the dream. And displacement is the substitution for an unconscious object of desire by one that is acceptable to the conscious mind. In displacement, one person or event is represented by another which is in some way linked or associated with it, perhaps because of a similarly sounding word, or by some form of symbolic substitution. And the symbolism which is the representation of repressed, mainly sexual, objects of desire by nonsexual objects which resemble them or are associated with them in prior experience.

H.S.Paudel tries to clarify a little bit in his book, *Theory for Beginners*. He writes:

The purpose of devices like displacement and condensation is two-fold. Firstly, as we said, they disguise the repressed fears and wishes contained in the dream so that they can get past the censor which normally prevents their surfacing into the conscious mind. Secondly, they fashion this material into something which can be represented in a dream, i.e., into images, symbols, and metaphors. Material has to be turned into this form for dreams, since dreams don't say things, they show things. In this sense, especially, as we have indicated, they are very like literature. (116)

As Freud famously said, 'There is always a return of the repressed'. Slips of tongue or pen, forgetting the names, frequently remembering the past events, and other similar accidents show this repressed material in the act of seeking a way back.

Freud also shows, in his book, *Interpretation of Dreams*, two components in a dream, i.e. manifest content and latent content. Manifest content is related to the conscious part of the mind where as latent content goes to the unconscious part of the mind. According to Freud, the disguised fantasies which are evident to consciousness are manifest content of a dream and the unconscious wishes which find a semblance of satisfaction in its distorted form is the latent content of a dream. In psychoanalysis, symbolism acquired a specific significance that differs from the general literary meaning. A symbol is generally regarded as something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else. Freud viewed the symbols that express unconscious mental content as determined by some essential physical resemblance. "Only what is repressed is symbolized; only what is repressed needs to be symbolized" (Johns, 1912). This conclusion is the touchstone of the psychoanalytic theory of symbolism.

Oedipus complex in Psychoanalysis

As a father of psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud develops a concept of oedipal complex in his book the '*Interpretation of Dreams*'. He develops this concept by turning to the Sophocles's drama, especially of Oedipus myth. According to him, Oedipus complex is the repressed desire or we can say the infantile sexual desire in which the male infant conceives the desire to eliminate the father and become the sexual partner of the mother. For Freud, sexuality begins not at adulthood with physical maturing but in infancy, especially through the infant's relationship with the mother. In regarding the concept of Oedipus complex, Freud says in his book, *The Ego and the Id* (translated and edited by James Strachey):

At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object-choice on the anaclitic model; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother became more intense and his father perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates. His identification with his father then takes on a hostile coloring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother. (31-32)

In this Oedipal triangle, the libidinal object-cathexis and identification (emotional-tie with an object) with his father are imagined as two separate and parallel objects. In this paragraph, the desire for the mother is reinforced and the identification with the father is also reinforced which takes on a hostile and revelrous way.

In the unconscious of every individual, according to Freud, there are residual traces ("residual memory") of prior stages of infancy which have been outgrown but remain as "fixations" in the unconscious of the adult. And those memories always seek the way back. This repressed wish is revived and motivates a fantasy in disguised form. The desire to kill the father and marry the mother may be rooted in deepest natural psychological development of the individual. One of the best known books in this mode is *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949) by Ernest Jones. Taking earlier ideas by Freud himself, Jones explained Hamlet's insanity to make up his mind to kill his uncle by reference to his Oedipus complex – i.e. the repressed but continuing presence in the adult's unconscious of the male infant's desire to possess his mother and to have his rival, father, out of the way.

The child feels sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex and desires the death of the parent of the same sex. It first appears between the ages of three and five years and returns at adulthood ("puberty") and in this point it is resolved, more or less, through the choice of an appropriate object outside the family. Freud remarks how 'every new arrival on this planet is faced by the task of mastering the Oedipus complex; anyone who fails to do so falls a victim to neurosis' (1949). As a psychiatrist, Freud developed his theories from the initial observation that patients were relieved of their neurotic symptoms by recalling the memory of certain events and ideas related to infantile sexuality.

Freudian concept of literature

Literature is a mean to save man from disorder and madness. Most of sinful and guilty aspects of human beings are expressed through literature. So literature is a kind of means for men to control their irrational and shrugged ideas. Every literature is output of Id-consciousness. The day to day affair which we in reality, can't face, we do that through literature. This has great contribution in the world of human life of civilization to run it properly.

We can see that Freudian psychology is the only systematic account of the human mind. He stands almost alone among the large number of psychologist in the field of psychoanalysis. If the irrational in human nature is not controlled by the rational, there would be all sorts of abnormalities and aberrations. Man would be little better than savage and brutes.

"Dreams and illusions of neurotic are in the nature of escape from this harsh reality. Art is an escape, a dream of the artist translated into a work of art. But art and neurotic illusion are vastly different in nature" (Freud 125). The influences of Freud on modern literature are so varied that no small selection from his work can begin to represent that influence. In the title, 'Creative Writers and Day Dreaming', Freud does suggest something of the range of his interest in the relationship between the author and his work. He draws an analogy between the artist's creation and dreams or fantasy. He is interested in literary works as expressions of the author's. He sees a piece of creative writings as a continuation for the play of childhood. To Freud, the hero of the romance is merely another manifestation.

Lacanian view of psychoanalysis

Lacan, as a psychoanalyst, puts forward the theory of psychoanalysis as the revival of Freudian theory in the light of language. He explains that language and its structure exist in human mind even at the infant's stage, but the form is chaotic. To make it clear, he divides human development into three stages: the mirror stage in which the infant makes an imaginary identification with its reflection in a mirror. The infant's experience before this stage is a jumble which he puts and calls "L' Hommlet" little man, omelet, shapeless mass of an egg oval stage. At the mirror stage infant looks in the mirror and is delighted by several qualities of its own image simultaneously. "In imagery a pre-oedipal stage in which the child has not yet differentiated him or herself from the mother and has accordingly not yet learned language" (Gurin, 204).

The oedipal crisis marks the entrance of the child into a world of symbolic order in which everything is separate, including conscious and unconscious self and other, words and actions. Language is the mixture of fixed meanings and metaphors. In imaginary stage the first being is the mother with whom it has interaction. There is the desire for the mother but in the symbolic stage there is a gap between subject and object. Likewise, in it the presence of language (father) disturbs and creates the gap. Language imposes a chain of words along with the ego moves while the unconscious remains in search of the object it has lost.

According to Lacan, dream is more like a language than the symptoms of repressed desires. He asserts that the unconscious is more than the source of primal instincts linked at randomly to ideas and images. Conscious and unconscious are asymmetrically co-presented in the inner structure and is governed by linguistic

experience. There is a little dispute between the ideas of Lacan and Freud. Freud puts mind in the brackets, which Lacan removes. Revealing the sources of mentality as alien, fixed and permanently subjective the child can no longer be in symbolic relationship with his mother. With the entry of his father, the child has to undergo separation individuation process. He has to realize the broad social and familial networks of symbolic order.

Under the impact of contemporary linguistics, particularly the work of Saussure and Jakobson, Lacan followed Freud by rethinking the unconscious in relation to language. Lacan's famous principle is 'the unconscious is structured like a language'. For Lacan the unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual, rather it is something that happens when coherent language becomes dislocated. Lacan's view is that from the time we enter language, we always have to 'pass through the defiles of the signifier' (1977, 264). Lacan says that unconscious is a play of the signifier that appears in dreams, slips of the tongue, witticisms or symptoms. According to Lacan, 'all processes of linguistic expression and interpretation, driven by "desire" for a lost and unachievable object, move incessantly a long chain of unstable signifiers without any possibility of coming to rest on a fixed signified or presence' (Abrams, 252).

Chapter III

A Psychoanalytical Reading of *The Moviegoer*

Walker Percy's first novel *The Moviegoer* deals with the psychological problem of the character, especially of the Binx Bolling, the protagonist of the novel. Obsessed with the lack, i.e. the lack of mother, the protagonist wanders around indulging himself in movie-watching, money-making, and seeking the company of woman. By recollecting the past events, bedding with the secretaries, and frequenting himself to the movies, he tries to fulfill the lack which lies in his unconscious since his childhood. The repressed desire of the unconscious creates a problem to him that it always tries to return to the consciousness. As a result, he shows different kinds of abnormal behaviors and, therefore, fails to relate with the world. In his attempts of satisfying himself, rather, he is escaping from the world. He seems to be in conflict with these things.

Binx Bolling is a Korean War veteran coming up on his thirtieth birthday. He comes from an 'old money', rather eccentric New Orleans family. He is something of a 'black sheep' and seemingly rather directionless. He passed up on a family approved career in medical research – a field in which he showed talent – but now works as a stockbroker in the family brokerage. He has abandoned New Orleans proper of the suburbs, spends his time money-making for his clients and himself, enjoying with the secretaries and going to the movies. He lives a prototypical lost bachelor life; superficially comfortable and satisfying to the point where a man must wander. He engages himself in something which he refers to as "The Search" (5). But he himself doesn't know that what he is going to search for. He projects himself to the different activities. He suffers from the pain, i.e. the pain of loss. He says: what is the malaise?

you ask. The malaise is the pain of loss. The world is lost to you, the world and the people in it, and there remains only you and the world and you no more able to be in the world than the Banquo's ghost. (120). For him, the world is lost, i.e. the world of mother's womb. Actually he refers to the world before birth and he is no more able to be in the world which he always desires.

Binx Bolling, a narrator of the novel, is representing the events that occurred at some point over a year in the past. Binx has been re-presenting to himself the feelings that he had earlier experienced, but had not been able to articulate. Walker Percy, writer of the novel, says Binx represents the self which is just coming to be. He implies such strategy in *From Facts to Fiction*:

When I sat down to write *The Moviegoer*, I was very much aware of discarding the conventional notion of the plot and a set of characters, discarded because the traditional concept of plot and character itself reflects a view of reality which has been called into question. Rather would I begin with a man who finds himself in a world, a very concrete man who is located in a very concrete place and time. Such a man might be represented as *coming to himself*... (9).

The man coming to himself is the Binx who has selected and arranged a group of images so that their form conveys, represents, and names his feelings to find himself. These images and the form they take have been influenced and formed by dreams. The boy Binx who got "excited" about Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (138), but was rebuffed by his mother's lack of interest is unconsciously driven by dreams. In epilogue, Binx who

by his conversion to Christianity (restitution of the lost object), can now understand his past condition for himself.

A surprising fact is that Percy, in this novel, tries to evoke in the reader as well as character a "shock of recognition" of the universal truths implicit in them. Percy says:

My theory is that the purpose of art is to transmit universal truths of a sort, but of a particular sort, that in art, whether its poetry, fiction or painting, you are telling the reader or the listener or the viewer something he already knows but which he doesn't quite know that he knows, so that in the action of communication he experiences a recognition, a feeling that he has been there before, a shock of recognition. And so, what the artists does or tries to do, is simply to validate the human experience and to tell the people the deep human truths which they already unconsciously know. (Cremeens, 271-90)

In the above citation, Percy clearly shows his motives to unveil the unconscious of the mind of the individual. In this novel, Percy tries to show the psychological makeup of Binx, the problems it creates to him and its consequences.

Actually, Binx recollects the past days of his life in which he goes to the movies four times and refer to twelve identified and several unidentified movies. His actions are motivated by his psychological forces over which he has very limited control. There is some truth to the diagnosis of Binx. He diagnoses himself by frequently going to the movies. He tries to fulfill the lack by the means of movie, a substitute object. According to Harvey R. Greenberg:

One encounters Chronic Movieomania in rigid, inhibited types who feel exquisitely uncomfortable when forced into closed interpersonal contact. Safe only in well-defined social situations, intolerably anxious if called upon to improvise, these people sleepwalk through the day's routine and only come alive at second hand, as proxy participants in the adventures of their screen idols. (4)

But Binx shows no interest in cinematographic technique nor does he say much about the acting technique. He shows interest in the film narrative or a character's action because it re-presents in some way some aspects of his life.

For Binx, the movie screen is the dream screen in the sense that movie screen gives him a little bit of satisfaction. When he sees the movie, he feels as if he gets the object which he always wants for or desires. Binx's desire for mother which is socially prohibited is replaced with the movie-watching, a socially accepted means. Here movie screen acts as a dream screen which gives the healing relief to secret mental emotion of Binx. It is a safety-valve preserving Binx from madness. It is the image of the movie-theater, rather, than the memory of a specific movie, which gives him more evocative impression. Theater is a dream symbol. Theater is the place where the typical stories of man's life are shown that is the unconscious are presented to consciousness. In one place Binx describes his neighborhood theater in Gentilly. In the word Gentilly, *gen* is the source of so many birth related word. He emphasizes its form not its function of presenting constantly changing attractions. For him, the theater "has permanent lettering on the front of the marquee reading: Where Happiness Costs so Little"(7). He adds, "the

fact is I am quite happy in a movie, even a bad movie". This is suggesting the primacy of the experience. It is not too much to say that he experiences "nyctophilia", which is defined by Bertram Lewin as "an erotic pleasure in darkness". This nyctophilia enters as a wish-fulfilling element in the fantasies which represents the "being in the womb" or "of being in the mother's body". In other words, Binx feels a need, whether by dreaming or by movie-going to regress to "the first incestuous object of the libido" (Freud, 350).

When Binx begins his recollection, he indicates that he had been awakened to the possibility of a search by a dream of his wounding in the Korean War, an event to which he will refer several times in his narrative. That event was no doubt traumatic. The imagery which Binx uses to describe it suggests that that memory "screens" is the memory of a more primal wounding: I remembered first time the search occurred to me. I came to myself under a chindolea bush... my shoulder didn't hurt but it was pressed hard against the ground as if somebody sat on me (10-11). Binx seems to remember about the 'birth fantasies'. To this citation, I would like to link with the J.C.Flugel's comment about anxiety, during his discussion of "birth fantasies". Actually, Flugel links the word *anxiety* with the Sanskrit word *anhus* which means 'narrowness or constriction'. He argues that anxiety 'bears witness to the fundamental association of fear with pressure and shortness of breath, which - the former owing to the passage through the narrow vagina, the latter to the interruption of the foetal circulation – constitute the most menacing and terrifying aspects of the birth process'(70). There is also another citation which is rather a vivid description of the moment of birth: only once in my life was the grip of everydayness broken: when I lay bleeding in a ditch (145).

Binx recollects the event of war where he had caught wounded, that is the representation of his birth trauma. It is significantly appropriate that he thinks of the wound in connection with all three women who play psychosexual roles in his life. As a businessman, he has to deal with his staff and different people but it is the female secretaries who must draw his attention. He pursues them with apparent motive of sexual pleasure. He spends most of his time with these splendid girls, his secretaries. Binx himself says, "...quitting work at five o'clock like everyone else, having a girl and perhaps one day settling down and raising a flock of Marcias and Sandras and Lindas of my own. Nor is the brokerage business as uninteresting as you might think. It is not a bad life at all" (9). Marcia, Sandra and Linda are his secretaries with whom Binx goes to different places by turns. But he doesn't stick to any of these secretaries. He keeps changing them one after another. As Percy writes, "... casting them off one after the other like old gloves" (8).

Actually these secretaries are presented in this novel as a substitute object for Binx's desire to possess his mother. As a result of the car collision on their way to the Gulf Coast, Sharon (Binx secretary) has to cut away Binx's T-Shirt:

I was shot through the shoulder – a decent wound, as decent as any ever inflicted on Rory Calhound or Tony Curtis. After all it could have been in the buttocks or genitals – or nose. Decent except that the nicked the apex of my pleura and got me a collapsed lung and a big roaring empyema.

(126)

In this citation, it is noteworthy that Binx's wounding results in a lung condition. As George Rosen says in his book named *Percussion and Nostalgia* that there is a long

tradition of suspecting that the nostalgia may causes some lung condition. As Freud says, 'there is always a return of the repressed', Binx's nostalgia creates him a problem of lung condition.

When Sharon, the mother-substitute, sees the scar of Binx, she becomes maternal: 'come on now, son, where did you get that?' (126). Sharon addresses Binx as a son. Binx is jubilant because his seduction is as good as done. Later at the fishing camp, Binx uses the episode of his wounding to try to get his entire life: 'what I am trying to tell you is that nothing seemed worth doing except something I couldn't even remember' (158). By this line, we can clearly understand that through the screening process he represses any recognition of the primal wound and therefore regresses in fantasy. And finally when he realizes in Chicago that he is falling in love with Kate, he says: 'there I see her plain, see plain for the first time. Since I lay wounded in a ditch and watched an Oriental finch scratching around in the leaves....' (206). Binx implies that his mental visualization is free, for some time, of 'the parent in the percept'. His ability to choose an appropriate mate enables him to transcend his yearning for the mother who will not nurture.

The first movie that Binx mentions is not the one that he actually attends during the time of being recollected but it is only remembered at this moment. Binx is obliged to recollect these movies. Almost all of the movies to which he refers are re-releases. This is a result of the return of the repressed. Since it is unidentified by title, the movie he mentions is just one that he "saw last month out by Lake Pontchartrain" (4) with Linda. What he says about the theater says much about his psychosexual regression: 'a strong wind whipped the waves against the seawall; even inside you could hear the racket' (4), and 'the theater was almost empty, which was pleasant for me' (5). For Binx, here, the

theater indicates his intrauterine residence, which he of course likes not to share. The repressed unconscious, i.e. the desire to go back to the symbiosis, of Binx comes to the consciousness in a disguised form.

In this regard, it is significant that the theater 'out by Lake Pontchartrain' represents the maternal womb for him. According to Sandor Ferenczi, a man has a drive to water as it symbolizes his phylogenetic history both as a fish and as a foetus. Such a drive activates the fantasy of copulating with the mother. Since this activity is forbidden, the actual copulation must occur with a substitute object. And these object, for Binx, are his secretaries all of whom he takes to the Gulf Coast. Ferenczi's "situation of the penis in the vagina, the foetus in the uterus, and the fish in the water" (45) can be seen clearly here. In this state of regression from the reality-principle (the ego) Binx have watched this movie closely:

The movie was about a man who lost his memory in an accident and as a result lost everything; his family, his friends, his money. He found himself a stranger in a strange city. Here he had to make a fresh start, find a new place to live, a new job, a new girl. It was supposed to be a tragedy, his losing all this, and he seemed to suffer a deal. On the other hand, things were not so bad after all. In no time he found a very picturesque place to live, a houseboat on the river, and very handsome girl, the local librarian. (4-5)

Percy says to this "the perfect device of rotation" in his essay *The Man on the Train*. The theme of the movie is a kind of rotation for Binx. Rotation simply means the changing of the person or the object in order to achieve a particular purpose. So, here Binx uses the

movie and characters in it as a kind of rotation to get his desire fulfilled and to get his mental relief. In this regard, I would like to bring here Lacan, a French Freud, who says: 'all the object move incessantly a long chain of unstable signifiers without any possibility of coming to rest on a fixed signified or presence' (252). Similarly Binx uses a long chain of unstable object, i.e. substitute object, to get the lost object (the mother). He always keeps them changing that is the process of substitution.

In the above citation, Binx very carefully neglects the ending. He stops his recapitulation at the point at which the ego-hero (man he mentions in a movie) reached a 'very picturesque houseboat on the river', which represents Eden for him that gives him a kind of heavenly pleasure and the local librarian, an ideal mother-substitute. Percy also says that "rotation's only term is suicide or self loss" that is seen in Binx himself. He admits the premature withdrawal from the plot:

The movies are onto the search, but they screw it up. The search always ends in despair. They like to show a fellow coming to himself in a strange place – but what does he do? He takes up with the local librarian, sets up about providing to the local children what a nice fellow he is, and settles down with a vengeance. In two weeks time he is so sunk in everydayness that he might just as be dead. (13)

Here 'everydayness' is the social norms and values which prevent him to get his lost object (the mother). He has already admitted that his rotation with Linda is over.

Several times a week, Binx rides the bus to remote theater in remote suburbs, ever seeking a new experience of movie-going. These wanderings are a significant part of Binx's search, and give him great pleasure, but don't alleviate the malaise, i.e. the pain of

loss, for any amount of time. Binx's habit of dating his secretaries is notorious; he mentions two of his previous secretaries in the first few pages, and a good deal of the novel's action centers around his pursuit of his new secretary. On a nice day in April Binx and Sharon take a trip to the coast, which Binx hopes for a supreme rotation. But, as Binx explains, the hope of rotation brings danger as well: 'where there is chance of gain, there is a chance of loss. Whenever one courts happiness, one also risks malaise' (121). Binx is pointing here to the fundamental connection rotation shares with time – rotation places the hope of alleviation in the future. The practice of rotation is the pursuit of perfect moments, and is ultimately the wrong remedy for malaise, not only because it passes quickly when it is achieved, but also because it draws attention away from individual life and into another abstraction time. Rotation identifies possibility but fails to heal the despair of 'everydayness'. Same is the case of Binx.

Binx always places himself in a movie theater, his fantasy substitute for the maternal womb. He illustrates, either by implication or by explication, the various aspects of his theory of psychology. He very clearly situates his intellect within a matrix of mother-loss. Binx is returning to past experience because it was pleasurable and he wants to repeat it – this is no better than rotation. Even though his repetition is enjoyable, Binx gains little from it:

How tasted my own fourteen years since The Oxbow Incident? As usual it eluded me. There was this: a mockery about the old seats, their plywood split, and their bottoms slashed, but enduring nonetheless as if they had waited to see. What I had done with my fourteen years? There was this also: a secret sense of wonder about the enduring, about all the

nights, the rainy summer nights at twelve and one and two o'clock when the seats endured alone the empty theater. The enduring is simply something that must be accounted for. One can not simply shrug it off.

(80)

Binx is a young bachelor stockbroker in New Orleans. He is a scion of a very old Louisiana family. When he was ten, his father died in a battle for Crete. Binx thinks that his father was so overwhelmed by everydayness that he 'got himself killed in the battlefield for Crete in 1941. When his father died, Binx's mother left him with his aunt Emily Curter to be raised. Binx thinks that his mother, who soon married again and started a second family, takes refuge in everydayness. As a teenager, Binx lived with his great aunt Emily who is a secular humanist with stoic and high art frosting. Aunt Emily is a conscious keeper of the Southern culture of memory. She is actually unselfish who constantly thinks of other. Binx also received a secular humanist education. Binx likes to recall her advice:

Every moment think steadily as a Roman and a man, to do what thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity, and a feeling of affection and freedom and justice. These words of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius

Antonius strike me as pretty good advice, for even the young scamp. (78)

Here I would like to describe Binx's objective-empirical world to see how he would response to his family, his aunt and the whole society as well.

His relationship with his aunt is very interesting. When his aunt questions, he answers his aunt mostly with yes's, no's and silence. Actually one can see Aunt Emily almost as a true personification of the 'everydayness'. She invokes the idea of the soldier,

the doctor, the everyman rather than addressing Binx as a unique entity. Aunt Emily wants him to be a doctor. Here the surprising fact is that Emily stands on one side and Binx's search on the other. So, we can see conflict between desires of society and individual person.

Binx's relationship with his Aunt Emily Curter is the most powerful example of his struggle with socially enforced objective values. Emily's life can be understood as a form of intellectually elitism, a belief in the 'world of books, music, art and ideas' (45). Her emphasis is upon the lofty regions that they can come to control those around her. She calls Uncle Jules a "Cato" and a cato he becomes: "so strong is she that sometimes the person and the past are transfigured by her. They become what she sees them to be" (49). The role of Emily Curter and her effects upon Binx's consciousness have been noted by a number of critics. Michael Kobre considers Emily "the most dominant influence in Binx's life" and that she is the embodiment of "the expectations of a traditional community" (26-27). He goes on to correctly outline that community as the upper class Stoicism of the Old South. In addition, he recognizes that the community Emily represents holds a great power over Binx. Kobre even comes to close to outline Binx's struggle against his Aunt's values in the correct light. He claims that Binx's resistance to Emily's sentimentalpessimism "derives from his aunt's character and the values she received from earlier generations of the Bolling family" (30-31). What needs to be added to this reading is a definition of Aunt Emily as the pure example of a misrelating of the self. Emily seems to be absorbed all the ideas of her society and to use them as if they were her own. Binx has participated in this society and uses its norms for almost all of his life. Emily has had "charge" of him since his early youth (3) and even at that age she was

instructing him the correct manner of living: "Scotty is dead. Now it's all up to you. It's going to be difficult for you but I know you are going to act like a soldier. This was true; I could easily act like a soldier. Was that all I had to do?" (4)

Even at this early age, her expectation for Binx provides a path upon which his individuality is unimportant. The only necessity is to take the path. This path corresponds to the one that Binx's social group would have him walk. It is an objective cultural symbol: "it seems so plain when I see it through her eyes. My duty in life is simple. I got to a medical school, I live a long useful life serving any fellowman" (54). By referring to Binx as "an ingrate, a limb of Satan, the last and sorriest scion of noble stock, Emily casts Binx's personality in terms of her society and "in a split second he has forgotten everything, the years in Gently, even his search" (26). The pull of everydayness is strong, so strong that it actually has the power to transfigure sight. Another interesting fact is that when Emily shows Binx the bottles found on Kate's armoire, even a disruption of Binx's physical ability to examine is impeded: "but instead she shows me something and searches by face what I see. With her watching me, it is difficult to see anything. There is a haze. Between us there is surely a carton of dusty bottles – bottles? – yes, surely bottles, yet blink as I will I can't be sure" (27). Under the pressure of 'everydayness', objects lose their undefined nature and take on meaning. This meaning is controlled by the society and in this example Binx is not free to make his own associations to the bottles. There is an expectation upon the part of the community that he "see" these bottles for what they really are. Virtually every object one can see is clouded with a similar application of cultural symbols. It was only through Binx's experience in

Korea that he manages to break from this objective 'haze' and begins to see himself not as an Everyman but as Binx.

What I have discussed above is the Binx's empirical world to which he likes to call 'everydayness'. And these so-called societal values prevent him to reach to his destination. So, these values are the enemy for Binx. Another incident that affects Binx's search is his love affair with his cousin, Kate Curter. Kate too is onto the possibility of the search, although she and Binx search quite differently. Binx and Kate have always been great friends, but recently Kate has fallen in deep despair. And Binx's aunt calls him to help her. Binx and Kate discuss their respective searches balancing each other nicely. When Binx is assigned to a Chicago business trip, Kate decides at the last minute to come along. Their love affair begins on the train. Kate, talking dismissively of her friends and relatives, speaks of her appreciation for Binx, and half-seriously proposes that they get married. Binx earnestly agrees, but Kate quickly sees that such a marriage will simply turn into another coping mechanism, that Binx "could only carry it off as one of his ingenious little researches". (193)

Thus, we have seen how Binx behaves uninterestingly with so-called empirical societal values. On Wednesday night, Binx goes to a movie *Panic in the Streets* with his aunt's stepdaughter Kate. In the movie, Richard Widmark plays a public health inspector who discovers "that a culture of cholera bacilli has gotten loose in the city... There is a scene which shows the very neighborhood of the theater" (63). Such a movie, focusing upon the objective-empirical world, emphasizes the values of its world view. Thus, for people indoctrinated with that world view, to see the familiar re-presented by a visual apparatus is to see the heightened reality. Such a movie seems to hold no promise for

Binx, but there is that phenomenon of "the triumphant reversal of alienation through its representing" (93). Binx call this the "phenomenon of movie-going... certification":

Nowadays when a person lives somewhere, in a neighborhood, the place not certified for him. More than likely he will live there sadly and the emptiness which is inside him will expand until it evacuates the entire neighborhood. But if he sees a movie which shows his very neighborhood, it becomes possible for him to live, for a time at least, as a person who is Somewhere and not Anywhere. (63)

In this citation, Binx clearly say that this place is not certified for him; he desires another place of infantile experience. He also says that 'if he sees a movie which shows his very neighborhood, means certified place, it becomes possible for him to live'. So, we can understand that in some sense movie satisfy him. Another fact Binx shows that he wants to see such a movie which is matched with his repressed desire.

On Thursday morning Binx projects to seduce to his new secretary, Sharon. Already he has begun to fantasize her as Aphrodite, the mother goddess. He sees Sharon as a golden creature. Classical poets used to compare their beloved with Aphrodite. Walter Otto, in his *Homeric Gods*, says "poets after Homer call [Aphrodite] 'golden and speak of her as the smiling goddess' (97). Here we can see Binx's visualization of Sharon as "Marilyn Monroe", who was the personification of Aphrodite. He praises every parts of Sharon's body as 'golden'. He says: "desire for her is like a sorrow in my heart" (68). His description of desire of Sharon is no more than his psychosexual complication of his desire. I would like to bring the quotation of Robert Romanyshyn's phenomenology of desire which would help to understand Binx's complication of desire. He says:

If desire is the story of a homecoming, then it is the story of a home which is present before one's consideration of the heavens but paradoxically also absent until after this consideration. It is a home which does not exist but paradoxically always is, a home which is not a fact but more like a promise. It is the home out of which dreams of paradise and tales of the gardens of Eden are born. It is the home we have never had but have always lived. (51-52)

Sharon then is the latest object to excite Binx's fantasy of the mother-land. As he secretively reads *Arabia Deserta*, he dreams of Sharon. The title *Arabia Deserta* describes his life in Gentilly and he dreams of the place where the water is.

On his way home Binx stops off at the Tivoli Theater. The theater as a form of the locus of Binx's womb fantasy, as discussed earlier, would have special appeal for him. The manager of the theater forces Binx to take a 'sample look' at a Jane Powell picture. Jane Powell is an actress. For Binx "Jane Powell is a very nice-looking girl", but the cheerful outgoingness of the actress is enough to drive him to despair as a symptom of sexual frustration. But one happy movie doesn't an alien make. Binx has to admit, "it was here in the Tivoli that I first discovered place and time, tasted it like okra" (75). This was during a re-release of *Red-River*, a couple of years before. It is the Binx's recollection of the past experience which demands close attention. In *Film and the Dream Screen*, Robert Eberwein bases the following paragraph on the thought of Julia Kristeva:

The infant's relationship to its mother after birth can be described as a kind of 'semiotic' *chora*... In its vocalizations and cries (these actions themselves revivals of more primitive activities engaged in within the

womb), the infant tries to survive by calling for food. The mother responds to this anaclisis by offering herself. Notice the similarity if the terms used by Kristeva to describe the mother and the kind of language one might use to describe the viewing situation in a theater. The mother sustains the infant by 'providing ... an axis, a projection screen, a limit, a support for the infant's invocation...' The union of infant and mother in the semiotic *chora* fixes a 'space': Orality, audition, vision: archaic modalities upon which the most precocious discretion emerges. The breast given and withdrawn; lamp light capturing the gaze; the intermittent sound of voices or music – these greet anaclisis... hold it, and thus inhibit and absorb it in such a way that it is discharged and calmed through them... Therefore, the breast, light, sound become a *there*; place, point, marker... The mark of an archaic point, the initiation into 'space,' the '*chora*.' ... there is not yet an outside. (32)

In the Tivoli, Binx had become energized by a dream of repetition, by a desire to go back to the time of symbiosis, before breast was lost as language was gained. Thus, he became the moviegoer. Binx's recollection of the Tivoli experience reminds him of another movie:

Once as I was traveling through the Midwest ten years ago I had a layover of three hours in Cincinnati. There was time to go see Joseph Cotton in *Holiday* at a neighborhood theater called the *Altamont* – but not before I had struck up an acquaintance with the ticket seller, a lady

named *Mrs. Clara James*, and learned that she had seven grand children all living in Cincinnati. (75)

The Cincinnati movie occurs to Binx having to do with a sense of place. For one thing, Cincinnati is the home of the famous "Eden Park". The theater's name Altamont would remind him of hometown. Mrs. Clara James might suggest the mother-substitute for him. The movie title *Holiday* suggests that Binx, in recalling the Tivoli, has been tempted to yearn for the Mutterleib (Freud defines this as 'of being in the mother's body'). The setting of the movie has an idyllic. The movie thematizes the contrast between objective-empirical values and object-relation values. Early on Wednesday Binx had seen a dream. He said "I ...once met a girl in central park, but it is not much to remember" (7). By this he implies that while he can try to repress his thoughts during the day he can not control the dreams that hangover his bed at night. Still, with the memory of *Holiday* he goes to a movie on Thursday night with Kate. When they come out of the movie, Binx says 'a successful repetition':

What is a repetition? A repetition is the reenactment of past experiences toward the end of isolating the time segment which has lapsed in order that it, the lapsed time, can be savored of itself and without the usual adulteration of events that clog time like peanuts in brittle. (79-80)

Binx's analogy between aesthetic repetition and peanut brittle is appropriate in stressing that experience, in his case, is gustatory. I am using the term 'aesthetic repetition' to which Percy defines as "the aesthetic repetition captures the savor of repetition without surrendering the self as a locus of experience and possibility" (*The Man on the Train*, 95).

Binx says that he is in 'the search' but his search always ends in despair. Why so? Because, I think, he never surrendered his 'self' as a fully devoted quester. He himself doesn't know what he is going to search for. He doesn't certain of what he is going to search. He is still engaged in the rotation and aesthetic repetition. Since Binx is still engaged in rotation and aesthetic repetition, he has not surrendered the self as a locus of experience and possibility in order to pursue the 'passionate quest'. Thus he can only "savor" the past. As if to demonstrate his refusal to surrender to the passionate quest, Binx dedicates Friday and Saturday to the great rotation of seducing Sharon. He is so engrossed in his plan that he isn't need to go to a movie on Friday night. Then, by noon on Saturday he has persuaded Sharon to go to the beach with him. On the way, he has got his car accident. By seeing the scar of Binx Sharon seems to intuit her role as a mother-substitute, because she begins to address him as 'son'. Through this fortunate accident, Binx is able to impersonate "Rory Calhoun or Tony Curtis", even "Bill Holden". Sharon is so captivated and maternal that Binx has 'Milk' on his mind as they take the ferry out to Ship Island. He is surrounded by "Milk White" country children, while the boat is "chuffing through the thin milky waters of Mississippi sound" (129). Regarding this issue I would like to add a small paragraph' to support my ideas' by Robert Firestone. He writes:

When deprived of love-food, an infant experiences considerable anxiety and pain and attempts to compensate by sucking its thumb and providing self-nourishment in various way. At this point in its development, a baby is able to create the illusion of the breast. An infant who feels empty and

starved emotionally relies increasingly on this fantasy for gratification.

And indeed, this provides partial relief. (37)

Same is the case of Binx. Robert says this process "lactophilia". Binx is very 'excited' on the beach. This especial excitement of Binx is suggested by a comment of D.W.

Winnicott about a line by Tagore "On the Seashore of endless worlds, children play":

When I first became a Freudian I knew what I meant. The sea and the shore represented endless intercourse between man and woman, and the child emerged from this union to have a brief moment before becoming in turn adult or parent. Then, as a student of unconscious symbolism, I knew (one always knows) that the sea is the mother and onto the seashore the child is born. Babies come up out of the sea and are spewed out upon the land, like Jonah from the whale. So now the seashore was the mother's body, after a child is born and the mother and now viable baby are getting to know each other. (5-6)

So, this paragraph clearly shows the reason for especial excitement of Binx on the beach. With such an emotional investment, Binx easily fantasizes Sharon as Aphrodite, born of the white foam. Sharon plays her role to perfection: "come on, son. I'm going to give you some beer" (131). With this emotional situation Binx no longer waits for next movement: "once when she gets up, I come up on my knees and embrace her golden thighs, such a fine strapping armful they are" (132). Then he pays her full homage: "sweetheart, I'll never turn you loose, mother of all living, what an armful" (132). 'Mother of all living' might suggests to the meaning of "Eve" so that Binx must be convinced that he is pretty close to paradise. Anyway, this was the very interesting point.

Now they plan to visit the fishing camp where Binx's mother lives. His mother is at the camp, surrounded by the six surviving children of her second marriage. The welcome that Binx receives from his mother is of a different order: "we give each other a kiss or rather we press our cheeks together, mother embracing my head with her wrist as if her hands were still wet" (137). Actually his mother shows a kind of rude or unfriendly behavior to him. In effect receiving this type of behavior from his mother, Binx ponders their relationship: "sometimes I feel a son's love for her, or something like this, and try to give her a special greeting, but at this time she avoids by eye and gives me her cheek..." (137-138). This sentence implies that the Binx has a desire to sleep with his mother. When, after a while, he tries again to talk to her, he gets the impression that she is "as old and sly as Eve herself" (142), but this is not the generous Eve he had earlier imagined Sharon to be, but the Great Mother.

In one place Binx says: "a young man am I, twenty nine, but I am as full of dreams as an ancient. At night the years come back and perch around my bed like ghosts" (144). These dreams of Binx are directed to the mother's breast, which is the place on which dreams originate. Binx had broached the subject of his dreaming with a similar image: "I dreamed of the war, no, not quite dreamed but woke with the taste of it in my mouth" (10). Since the wartime experience is a screen memory for his infantile trauma, it is accompanied by a taste.

On the occasion, in his dream Binx had got up to walk to the lake. On his way he thought of his father, another poor sleeper like Binx: "my father used to suffer from insomnia" (85). Actually both are the victim of insomnia (the condition of being unable

to sleep). Binx's father got killed himself in the battle for Crete when Binx was ten. But still today Binx hates his father. He says his bitter comment to his father in this way:

He found a way to do both: to please the family and please himself. To leave. To do what he wanted to do and save old England doing it. And perhaps even carry off the grandest coup of all: to die. To win the big prize for them and for himself (but not even he dreamed he would succeed not only in dying but in dying in Crete in wine dark sea. (157)

This paragraph is nothing but his internal psychology to take a hostile coloring with his father in order to take his place with his mother. Then Binx suddenly wakes at the fishing camp and he says: "... my old place is used up and when I awake, I awake in the grip of everydayness. Everydayness is the enemy" (145). Binx implies with this sentence that his old place, i.e. mother's breast, is already used up by his father. And when he knows about this he is surrounded by the 'everydayness' that is the social norms and values which prevents him to have his mother again. Here Binx seems to be frustrated. But his frustration remains no longer as Freud says that 'there is always a returned of the repressed'. As Binx listens to his stepfather going off to fish, he becomes aware of his isolation: "the hull disappears into a white middle distance and the sound goes suddenly small as if the boat had run into cotton. A deformed live oak emerges from the whiteness, stands up in the air, like a tree in a Chinese print. Minutes pass" (147-8). Then Binx can only wait to his mother: "behind me a screen door opens softly and my mother comes out on the dock with a casting rod... 'Hintihonh', she says in a yawn-sigh as wan and white as the morning. Her blouse is one of Roy's army shirts and not much too big for her large breasts" (148). In fantasy Binx has pursued the mother during his entire narration, and

now she stands before him, "her large breasts", lactating his world which created the Milky Way. Binx pulls on his pants, to walk barefoot into "a cool milky world" (148):

'Isn't it mighty early for you!' Her voice is a tinkle over the water.

My mother is easy and affectionate with me. Now we may speak together.

Is it early morning and our isolation in the great white marsh.

'Can I fix you some breakfast?'

'No'm. I'm not hungry.' Our voices go ringing around the empty room of the morning. (149)

Surely it comes as a surprise that Binx would refuse her gesture, for Binx has been speaking of the empty room that represents the womb and the whiteness of the water and of the empty movie screen that represents the breasts. But Binx's next statement explains his reason for declining, "she still puts me off" (149). Binx seems to realize that it is impossible to be a sexual partner (as Freud says) of his mother because 'everydayness' prevents him to do that. Here Binx's 'superego' overcomes his libidinal 'Id'.

It should be remembered that Binx is constructing his narrative at least a year after the fact. It should be kept in mind, too, that Binx uses his narrative either the same terms-rotation, aesthetic repetition-or closely equivalent terms-"malaise" for alienation, "search" for existential repetition-of the psychological system discussed in "The Man on the Train". Thus he implies that he is basing his interpretation and description of his earlier behavior on that system. And also, since he mentions Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* in connection with his teenage curiosity and his mother's aloofness (138), he implies a long and close sensitivity to psychoanalytic literature, especially as it might

benefit him. Finally he identifies himself as a "moviegoer" (10) and uses movie going to illustrate his psychological makeup.

Lewin argues, depending upon the Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, that a wish to sleep is "the prime reason for all dreaming, the dream being the great guardian of sleep" (419). He was also pondering M.J. Eisler's assertion "that sleep is a regressive phenomenon, a return to hypothetical preoral and apnoeic stage, such as might be imagined for the unborn child" (419). So, he was inspired to conceive of the "dream screen".

Here I want to bring Mark Kanzer's assertion about the 'dream screen' which could be invaluable to support my ideas. Kanzer, in his *Observations on Blank Dreams with orgasms'* says that:

When a baby nurses, it wishes to nurse to gratification, then to drop into a dreamless, regressive sleep. The last visual impression that it receives before sleeping is the huge blank breast that is not far enough distant even to be perceived as an object separate from the ego. The baby therefore internalizes the breast as a blank dream, a blank screen with nothing in it. This internalization is not abandoned in time. As the ego develops-unconscious wishes that threaten to awaken the sleeper-are projected onto the dream screen, but that screen is ordinarily not recalled when the manifest dream is recalled. But as some people begin to awaken, the ego sometimes has the experience of seeing the dream, losing its flat appearance. The experience of the dream screen seems more prevalent among those dreamers who have deep oral fixations. Such

dreamers also have fantasies of intrauterine regression, but there is also the possibility of a conflicting psychic energy, a death wish. Thus, some such dreamers fight with sleep, the tensions may be carried over into a dreamlike awakening in which identifications and instinctual goals remain confused. (Kanzer, 519)

Then how can we apply the model of dream screens in Binx's narrative? With his first description of movie going, Binx shows that a movie-theater represents his fantasy of regression to the womb. When he comes out of his movie going, he heads for water, another image of intrauterine flight. He has spilt his fantasy figure: Mrs. Schexnaydre is the "bad mother", while each new secretary is the "good mother". Binx oral fixations show that his need to nurse to satisfaction, so that he could sleep soundly and thus see the dream screen instead of the manifest content which haunts his head. Instead, he suffers from the dream disturbance because the regression might be fatal.

In the scene at the Fishing Camp, Binx suffers from dreaming and makes a first effort to resist. Then he dreams the dream screen (146-7), even tries to prevent 'color' and 'sound' from occurring on the screen and waking him. His rejection of her offer to make his breakfast reveals that he is coming to the realization that she simply can't be a gratifying mother. He is progressing from a dependence upon ideal internal objects toward a more realistic response to things as they are which can be called the 'ego development'. But this doesn't mean that Binx's recovery will be complete. On the way back to New Orleans on Sunday afternoon, he falls back into his rotational fantasy, seeking "the thickest and innermost part of Sharon's thigh" (166). Suddenly Sharon had asked Binx, "Is Miss Curter any kin to you?" (118), already suspecting that the romantic

role of Binx secretary is to be a temporary, not a permanent hire. Then his fantasy of attainment having thus been rebuffed. He goes to the home of Aunt Emily to suffer from his loss of sleep "during the past week" (182).

When Binx meets Kate, they begin to discuss their marriage. Binx compares Kate as Rachel. There is the possibility that he is thinking of the Rachel who wept for her children. He knows that he needs that kind of wife who can feed his maternal deprivation. For once, he is free of the desire that is symptomatic of his nostalgia (207). In the Epilogue, Binx reviews the events which have occurred since he and Kate decided to marry. The June marriage and his September entry into medical school indicate that he had escaped the hold of mother-loss. Thus, he transcends both the preoedipal and oedipal conditions that had caused his psychic dysfunction. Now he doesn't mention the movies. Instead he reveals that on the day of Lonnie's death, he took his brothers and sisters to ride the train in Audubon Park (240). Binx is still the man on the train, but his destination now is the city of God.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

The protagonist Binx Bolling's activities show that he is suffering from a kind of psychological problem. And this internal structure channels and directs him. His psychological forces motivate his actions over which he has very limited control. Obsessed with the feeling of lack, i.e. the lack of mother which always haunts him, he wanders around indulging himself in movie-watching, recollecting the past, and seeking the company of women. He uses these activities, as a kind of substitution, to fulfill the lack. He projects himself with these activities. His repressed desires are transformed into dream images, the substitution of these wishes. He finds himself trapped into mundane things to which he calls 'everydayness', social norms and values which prevents him to possess his mother (the unachievable object) which he always desires from his childhood. He has been representing the events that he had earlier experienced but had not been able to articulate. He goes to the movies in the name of 'the search' but he himself doesn't know what he is going to search for. Thus, the novel *The Moviegoer* becomes a novel of a man who finds himself in a state of conflict between 'everydayness' and 'malaise', the pain of loss. In other words, he is in a state of conflict between the need for expression and the compulsion to repress the self revelation.

As a victim of his desire, Binx Bolling was deprived of his parents when he was ten because his mother left him to be raised in his Aunt Emily' house after her husband died in the battle for Crete in 1914. So, he was deprived of his maternal love from his childhood. Although he is a successful bond businessman, he feels the 'lack' of something

in his life and embarks on a 'search'(the search of his mother), to fulfill this lack. In this attempt to fulfill the lack, he indulges himself in the pleasure seeking activities. For him, the world is lost, the world of one's childhood and he is no more able to be in the world which he always desires. As a result, he frequents himself to the movies by comparing the movie screen as a dream screen in which the events of his past world happens simultaneously. He has selected and arranged a group of images so that these images form his past and give name to his feelings to himself.

Actually, Binx recollects the past days of his life in which he goes to the movies four times and refers to several identified and unidentified movies. He diagnoses himself, in some sense, by going to the movies. He always places himself in a movie theater, his fantasies substitute for the maternal womb. He very clearly situates his intellect within a matrix of mother loss. Through the screening process, he represses any recognition of the primal wounding and therefore regresses in fantasy. In short, he has a need, by movie going, to regress to the first incestuous objects of the libido. For him, the theater is a dream symbol in which the story of his past life are shown that is his unconscious is presented in the movie screen. He involves himself in random sexual activities with his secretaries. For him, these secretaries represent his mother-substitute who can feed his maternal deprivation. These secretaries are lactating his world as a mother lactates his new born baby.

When he returns to his Aunt Emily's house he meets his cousin Kate. And they discuss their marriage. He compares Kate with Rachel, who wept for her children. He knows that he needs that kind of wife who can feed his maternal deprivation. In his childhood loneliness, Binx has sought fantasy friends in the movie theater, the locus of

loss, but he has found a fellow inhabitant in the city of love. For once, he is free of the desire of his nostalgia but the forces of his past do not, however, give up their hold so easily as Freud says "there is always a return of the repressed". He once again 'falls prey to desire' because he repeats his search for his secretary Sharon. But Sharon has already left him. Here Kate proves loyal because she doesn't abandon him as his fantasy-mother Sharon does. Kate plays the role of 'savior' for Binx. They get married and Binx goes to the medical school. This indicates that Binx has escaped the hold of mother-loss and he transcends both the pre-oedipal and oedipal conditions that have caused his psychic disorder. In the Epilogue, Binx attends his half-brother, Lonnie's funeral and attempts to console his other step-siblings. Binx now leaves his profession as a stockbroker. He completely leaves behind the empty pursuit of lost object because he realizes that it is impossible to get the lost object (the mother) and tries to help people. In this way, from the beginning he suffers from the 'malaise', the pain of loss, which causes his strange and abnormal activities.

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