

Cairo University
Faculty of Arts
Department of English Language & Literature

The Archetype in Some Selected Plays by Peter Shaffer

An M.A Thesis

Submitted by:

Inas Mohamed Aly

Supervised by:

Prof. Mona A. El Halawany
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الاسم	الدرجة العلمية	التوقيع
(١) د. محمد الخواصر	أ. د.	د. محمد الخواصر
(٢) د. فوز عبد السلام حمزة	أ. د.	د. فوز عبد السلام حمزة
(٣) د. سامر عبد الكريم	أ. د.	د. سامر عبد الكريم
(٤) د. /	أ. د.	د. /

To my daughter

Nour El Hoda

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Introduction

Peter Shaffer (1926 -) is a contemporary British dramatist, who has written poetry, plays, short stories, novels, essays and reviews. He began his writing career with the three detective novels in collaboration with his twin brother, Anthony Shaffer: *The Woman in the Wardrobe* (1951), *How doth the Little Crocodile* (1952) and *Withered Murder* (1955). Arousing suspense and pursuing information are detective elements that influenced Shaffer's later theatrical experience.

The influence of the second world war provoked Shaffer to "rely on the conventional social realism" and "issues from contemporary life" in writing his first plays (Gianakaris 15-6). These plays are: *The Salt Land* (1955), *The Prodigal Father* (1957) and *Balance of Terror* (1957).

Shaffer launched his first success for the stage with *Five Finger Exercise* (1958). It brought him renown as a serious playwright and earned the London Evening Standard Drama Award and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and Best Foreign Play of the season in 1960.

Shaffer is most known for his plays which address complex psychological and philosophical issues like man's inability to comprehend God's ways, man's inner disintegration and his persistent need to liberate his soul. *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1964) highlights the shift from plays that deal with social criticism to philosophical and historical drama. *Equus* (1973) marks a new stage in Shaffer's theatre with the introduction of psychological issues. *Amadeus* (1979) signals shaffer's tremendous innovations in drama with the movement from farcical comedies to the portrayal of human anguish. "Shaffer has been heralded for his successful work in a variety of dramatic

atmosphere created in the plays. Also, the music associated with characters pinpoints contrasted characters through displaying two different types of music that reflect different social roles. Music intervals function as a relief from tension. Shaffer's tremendous manipulation of music is evident when used as the focus of his drama and the foundation upon which his plots are based.

Although Shaffer is influenced by the theatres of Artaud and Brecht, he is not labelled as an advocate of either 'epic theatre' or the 'theatre of cruelty'. Shaffer's main target was to establish his own peculiar drama. Through employing the third person narrator, the past tense, and stage directions, Shaffer reflects his interest in what Brecht refers to as the 'alienation effect'.

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), the German playwright, who replaced dramatic theatre by epic theatre explains that "only the epic form can enable the drama to find a comprehensive image of the world" (*Brecht on Theatre* 68). Shaffer, influenced by Brecht, adopts some techniques to break up the form of the traditional theatre. He believes that a theatre should provide the audience with a world that would encourage them to think. This is attained by providing music intervals, continuous comments while limiting suspense and tension. Also, by shattering the illusion of reality on stage, he is continuously reminding the audience that they are only watching theatre not real life. Moreover, the panorama of characters and broad universal problems emphasize the sense of detachment. Shaffer's *Royal Hunt* exemplifies some of Brecht's 'stylized theatre'. Brecht theorizes:

We need a type of theater which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself. (190)

of his own making. In the article, "*Amadeus*. A Glimpse of the Absolute Theatre", Mathew Scott explains:

...Surely the historical authenticity of the character is irrelevant. It is its use in the theatrical whole which is under consideration. I would ask that *Amadeus* be considered as theatre and that audience accept those concepts of time, place, and character peculiar to theatre. (41-2)

Shaffer embarks upon historical figures in order to explore more fundamental and universal human issues. "It was never Shaffer's intent to render as accurate either the historical account or the representations of the psychiatric profession" (La Manna, on line). In defending Shaffer's dramatic purpose, one critic argues:

It was his [Shaffer's] decision, though, which material to include and emphasize, which to leave out, and how to fill the remaining gaps. Following the logic of his premise, he has indeed created his own version of history. (Kurowska, on line)

In his attempt to defend himself against those critics who accused him of ignoring the historical truth, Shaffer declares in the article entitled "Paying Homage to Mozart":

Neither play nor picture represents a documentary life of Mozart, but both borrow deliberately and delightedly from the conventions of his operas. (38)

The aim of the present study is to reveal the influence of the archetypal theory on Shaffer's plays. Archetypal criticism came into being in the late 1950s in association with the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961). Its target is to develop correlations "between literature and other objects of study that exist 'outside' the narrowly formalist conception of literature" (Davis & Schleifer 94). These objects that archetypal criticism employs are history, mythology, ideology and psychology. "Archetypal criticism pleads for the existence of universal symbols, specific neither to the individual nor to his

incorporates ideas associated with fundamental experiences in life and involves both "the dark side as well as the light" (Jacobi 42). Thus, Plato's concept of the 'idea' is proved to be not identical but analogous to the archetype.

The concept of the archetype in its modern sense displays the influence of the philosophers Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945). Kant's theory of knowledge maintains that it is neither 'ideas' nor 'sense impressions' that constitute the origin of knowledge but a synthesis of both. "All propositions are partly a priori and partly empirical" (Hawton 93). Kant dismisses the empiricist view that all our concepts are sensuous relying on direct observation. Such concepts he refers to as 'a posteriori'². Also, Kant departs from the abstract 'metaphysical idea' of the rationalists who believe that knowledge can be attained by 'innate concepts', independent of sense experience. According to Kant:

The mind is neither passive, as the empiricists taught, nor endowed with innate ideas that enable it to discover the nature of reality beyond the senses. The mind is active and it creates its own world. Space, time and the categories of the mind are pure forms, prior to experience and contributed by the mind itself. Given an external stimulus, these pure forms fashion for us the phenomenal world. (Hawton 88)

Kant's concepts, which are universal and independent of sense experience build up "the structure of thought" which "is logically prior to experience" and "the same for all men". This he calls 'a priori'³. Archetypes are "similar to the Kantian categories" and the term 'archetype' can be understood as quite similar to and influenced by Kant's term 'a priori' (Jung 10: 10). Both archetype and Kant's 'a priori' incorporate ideal and instinctual experiences. They are neither metaphysical abstracts nor 'basal experiences'. Jung's archetypes are "categories analogous to the logical categories which are

Although Jung was at one time the student of Freud (1856-1939), he moved away from Freud's theory which he considers too narrow to include his new theory of the collective unconscious. Freud's famous book, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) reveals his belief in a basic pattern of thought. This shared pattern refers to one's latent potentiality to resist repression and to express unconscious wishes through dreams and other forms of expression. These forms include the artistic activities of drawing, painting, sculpture, music and story writing. Freud argues that the analytic method of 'free association'⁵ helps one to express whatever comes to mind resisting any repression of thoughts and feelings.

Freud's contribution to the archetypal theory is recognized in his two main concepts. First, the existence of a general pattern that is developed during childhood and persists through adulthood. Second, the establishment of the significance of dreams as the free expression of one's unconscious, particularly, that dream reflects patterns similar to those found in myth and ritual, the main sources of archetypes.

Freud's theory of the unconscious paved the way for Jung to build and expand upon it in spite of what Jung disapproves and considers too narrow. Freud's realm of the unconscious is analyzable and is expressed through 'dreams, jokes and writings'. Also, it is personal because it arises from the individual since its contents are shaped upon one's infancy. "For Freud, accordingly, the unconscious is of an exclusively personal nature, although he was aware of its archaic and mythological thought forms" (Jung 91: 3). Freud's unconscious is a 'negative area' where the individual's conscious materials are deliberately repressed either because they are unpleasant or because they are not in accordance with the ego.⁶ It is "only a gathering place for the forgotten and repressed wishes" (Laszlo, *Psyche and Symbol* 180).

Critics influenced by archetypal ideas theorize that the structures and patterns of myth and ritual are interconnected with structures of literature. The archetypal approach of interpreting literature takes us far from the historical and aesthetic values of the literary study. It goes back to the beginning of humankind's earliest rituals and beliefs, right into the individual's life. Hence, it is such archetypal ideas that give impetus to archetypal criticism which examines the presence and significance of original recurring patterns in the literary texts. It concentrates on the expression of universal situations in literature through images, patterns and character types.

Northrop Frye (1912-1991), the celebrated Canadian literary theorist, introduces a new definition of the archetype that contributes to the development of archetypal criticism and highlights the influence of the archetypal theory on criticism. Frye explains:

By archetype I mean an element in a work of literature, whether a character, an image, a narrative formula, or an idea, which can be assimilated into a larger unifying category... A symbol which connects one poem with another, and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience. And as the archetype is the communicable symbol, archetypal criticism is primarily concerned with literature as a social fact and as a mode of communication. (*Anatomy of Criticism*. 99)

Shaffer and the archetype

This study will provide an examination of Shaffer's representative plays through an analytic study of characters, patterns, themes, images and symbols. It intends to reveal the Jungian archetypes as expressed in three plays: *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* (1964), "a play about a man's search for immortality" in the form of fame (Shaffer, *New York Times* 1965: 3), *Equus* (1973), a drama which depicts "the envy of one man who hasn't experienced emotion" (Plunka 152) and *Amadeus* (1979) which overtly criticizes obsessive human ambition against Divine authority. The

of the archetype, its definition, function, and salient characteristic features. Also, it investigates concepts related to the archetype such as rebirth and individuation. This chapter refers to the archetypes of the 'shadow' and 'persona' which are inextricably linked to the study of Shaffer's dramatic vision.

Chapter two is an analysis of the plays of Shaffer, *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, *Equus* and *Amadeus* with reference to Jung's archetypes. It traces the motives of the characters, their conflicts and their development within the pattern of the archetypal journey.

Chapter three displays the theory of symbols in Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). It presents the different types of symbols and their patterns of thought and action. It also expounds Frye's definition of the archetype.

Chapter four refers to Shaffer's deliberate use of imagery through a detailed analysis of symbols and images that bear archetypal meaning to the plays of Peter Shaffer.

Chapter I

Jung's Theory of the Archetype

Jung's theory of the archetype presents the unconscious as a psychic realm that contains all the materials and experiences from which the conscious realm derives its contents. For this reason, the unconscious, in the Jungian usage is considered a "positive rather than negative factor" since it gives and provides rather than receives and accepts. Jung's theory maintains that the unconscious is:

Every thing of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking, everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten, everything perceived by my sense, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness: all this is the content of the unconscious. (Jung 8: 105)

Jung discriminates between two unconscious layers: The personal and the collective. The 'personal unconscious' is what he refers to as 'the superficial layer'. It: "is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed" (Jung 91: 42). In other words, the personal unconscious is the place where the individual accumulates memories, images, and impressions from personal experience. Complexes constitute the content of the personal unconscious. They are emotionally affected ideas that are split off from consciousness because of incompatible tendencies that may either form an obstacle that hinders conscious activity from proceeding or helps in creative activities. Progoft describes the unconscious area from Jung's view as "the large, amorphous, creative area deep within the person" (56). However, the personal unconscious is formed

representation, or process, and its form may change continuously according to the constellation in which it occurs" (Jacobi 40).

Jung is interested in what the archetype represents and in the knowledge it unveils concerning the deeper sphere of the individual's psyche. His writings show an interest in the interpretations that are provoked in the mind of the individual by an archetype. The archetypes of the collective unconscious are manifested through specific atavistic forms and to be perceived they are reflected at first in dreams and fantasies and then in myths, rituals, and fairy tales. Because Jung's pivotal issue is the collective or 'objective psyche', he realizes that the patterns which occur in myth are more parallel to those that the archetype produces. Jung says: "The psyche contains all the images that have ever given rise to myth..." (91: 7). Accordingly, Jung regards myth as a function that originates in the structure of the human psyche. It can be looked upon as a collective function based on an unconscious psychic experience. In Jungian terms, "myth is an involuntary statement of an unconscious process" (Williams 248). Because its patterns resemble those found in dreams and those upon which the human psyche is founded, it can be considered a primary mode of thinking, perceiving, acting and reacting. Myth as a structural entity of the psyche provides the collective unconscious with contents. Hughes explains:

The collective unconscious appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the mythos of all nations is its exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious. (54)

The archetypes exist in 'pre-logical thoughts' as "pre-conscious psychic disposition" (Jung 91: 78). This anterior 'disposition' is transferred through generations as root experiences of which its 'residua' are inherited. Progoff describes it as "tendencies that are ingrained in the nature of the