



Oedipal Identity of the Patriarch in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *The Autumn of The Patriarch*

IDENTITE OEDIPIENNE DU PATRIARCHE DE L'AUTOMME DU PATRIARCHE DE GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

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Abstract

In his masterpiece *The Autumn of the Patriarch*- G. G. Marquez describes the death and the life of a dictator having no name, living more than 200 years in an unknown island. Marquez's literary creation of such dictator whose power overshadowed the whole universe, even the sun and the moon, provides an opportunity of psychoanalytic study. Sigmund Freud's psychological theory especially Oedipus complex and unconscious crises seem to be appeared in the dictator's character and his relationship with other characters in the novel. The most noticeable one is the sort of relationship exists between the dictator and his mother.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) believes that human personality consists of three parts called the Id, Ego and the Superego. Id, Ego and Superego are together called an energy system, a kind of sexual energy which Freud believes to be the motivations of what all humans do - Libido. The Oedipus complex that Freud gets its name from an ancient Greek drama (tragedy) by Sophocles called Oedipus the Rex in which Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother; it contains a sort of psychological conflict between the child's id and the superego.

Based on what Freud tells about the Oedipus complex, the researchers try to find the oedipal identity of the dictator in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*.

Key words: Id; Ego; Superego; Oedipus complex and Libido

Résumé

Dans son chef-d'œuvre L'Automne du patriarche de l' Marquez-GG décrit la mort et la vie d'un dictateur ayant pas de nom, vivant à plus de 200 ans dans une île inconnue. La création littéraire Marquez du dictateur dont la puissance éclipsée ces tout l'univers, même le soleil et la lune, fournit une occasion d'étude psychanalytique. Théorie psychologique de Sigmund Freud en particulier les crises complexe d'Œdipe et de l'inconscient semble être apparu dans le caractère du dictateur et de sa relation avec les autres personnages dans le roman. La plus notable est le genre de relation existe entre le dictateur et sa mère.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) estime que la personnalité humaine se compose de trois parties appelées l'Id, moi et le surmoi. Id, moi et du surmoi sont ensemble appelé un système énergétique, une sorte d'énergie sexuelle que Freud croit être les motivations de ce que tous les humains ne - Libido. Le complexe d'Œdipe que Freud obtient son nom d'un drame antique grec (tragédie) de Sophocle Oedipe appelé le Rex dans lequel Œdipe tue son père et épouse sa mère, il contient une sorte de conflit psychologique entre l'ID de l'enfant et le surmoi.

Basé sur ce que Freud parle du complexe d'Œdipe, les chercheurs tentent de trouver l'identité œdipienne du dictateur dans L'Automne du patriarche.

Mots clés: Id; Ego; Surmoi; Complexe d'Œdipe et de la libido

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INTRODUCTION

Born in the northern Colombian town of Aracataca on March 6, 1928, Gabriel Garcia Marquez is regarded as one of the most famous authors of the South America. His novels and short stories knotted to magic realistic world. The world, in which Marquez was born, nurtured and wrote. One of those famous novels is *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975). It deals with the notion of power and the abuse of power. Marquez was mainly under the influence of William Faulkner (1897-1962) when he wrote this piece of monologue.

It is generally accepted that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is Marquez's masterpiece and he got the Nobel Prize for writing this novel. Yet, his second masterpiece which took him 7 years to write is *The Autumn of the Patriarch*. It is the story of an old general – a president of an unknown country- lived more than hundreds years and ruled as a dictator.

Many critics proposed their critically looking on this great literary work and studied it throughout the approaches and themes such as postmodernism, dictatorship, post structuralism, magic realism and so on. Yet, a Freudian Identity is one of those critically looking that scarcely any one tried to experience it for this novel.

Needless to say Sigmund Freud is one of the essential characters of psychology. His well known ideas on human unconsciousness lead the researchers to focus on one of the unconscious aspects of human being called Oedipus complex. In short, this is the desire of the son for killing his father in order to marry his mother. The very name of the complex is got from an ancient drama (tragedy) written by Sophocles under the title of Oedipus the Rex. Oedipus was a prince whose parents decided to have him killed due to escaping from a disastrous fate. Due to the fact that no one has the ability of escaping his/ her fate, Oedipus finally killed his father and married his mother.

The present article tries to focus on the Patriarch's oedipal identity and his unconscious aspects of mind. The researchers try to study the General's childish aspects of his character and prove the theory that the patriarch is still living in his childhood when he experienced his oedipal complex and other unconscious aspects of a child's character.

1. ID, EGO, SUPEREGO AND OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Before developing the Oedipus complex, it is important to refer to Freud's distinction between unconscious and conscious parts of one's mind. It is believed that not particularly Freud invented the idea of conscious and unconscious aspects of mind; yet, obviously he made it popular. What we are aware of at any moment is the conscious part of our mind. There is a term called preconscious closely related to the conscious: "anything

that can easily be made conscious, the memories you are not at the moment thinking about but can readily bring to mind" (George Boeree, 1997, p. 5).

Freud believes that these two parts are just the smallest parts of the mind. The largest part of one's mind is dedicated to the unconscious part. It contains the things that are not easily available, such as instincts. Actually, this part of the mind is the source of all human's motivations. He called this part Id.

Id which operates the pleasure principle contains all the instinctual drives that seek immediate satisfaction. There are two other aspects of human personality: ego and superego. The ego being conscious tries to perceive the real world and how to act. It operates the reality principle, or what the society dictates.

The superego deals with the moral norms learnt by parents and society. It somehow controls what the id insists on.

Id, Ego and Superego are together called an energy system, a kind of sexual energy which Freud believes to be the motivations of all human being do - Libido. Here, it is Ego that make a balance between what the Id insists on and what the Superego prevents.

The Oedipus complex that Freud drives its name from an ancient Greek drama (tragedy) by Sophocles called *Oedipus the Rex* in which Oedipus unknowably kills his father and marries his mother; contains a sort of psychological conflict between the child's id and the superego. In his *The Ego and the Id*, Freud says the following about the Oedipus complex:

...a male child may be described as follows. 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 him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates. His identification with his father then takes on hostile coloring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother. Henceforward his relation to his father is ambivalent; it seems as if the ambivalence inherent in the identification from the beginning had become manifest. An ambivalent attitude to his father and an object-relation of a solely affectionate kind to his mother make up the content of the simple positive Oedipus complex in a boy. (1989, p. 26-27)

If a child cannot be able to pass this stage, so many psychological problems will occur and it seems he will stay on that age for ever.

Freud also refers to two other stages called latent stage and genital stage. During the latent stage, Freud believes that "the sexual impulse was suppressed in the service of learning. The genital stage begins, and represents the resurgence of the sex drive in adolescence, and the more specific focusing of pleasure in sexual intercourse" (George Boeree, 1997, p. 12).

Now, based on what Freud tells about the Oedipus complex, the researchers try to find the oedipal identity of

the dictator in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*.

2. PATRIARCH (THE GENERAL) AND OEDIPUS COMPLEX

The novel starts with the description of how people found the patriarch dead in his palace. This time is not the first time people heard the news of his death. The dictator died some times before too. Yet, this time seems to be the last.

The president or what mostly called the patriarch is physically described by Marquez as so:

“It would have been easier for a person to let himself be conceived by the immediate indications of the ring with the presidential seal or the supernatural size of his feet of an implacable walker or the strange evidence of the herniated testicle which the vultures had not dared peck” (Marquez, 1975, p. 42).

The physical appearance of the patriarch especially his feet are similar those of Oedipus the king: “the royal couple of Thebes had the infant’s feet pierced and tied together -that’s the meaning of the name Oedipus”, “swollen feet” (web, June 2011).

The similarities in physical aspects of patriarch and Oedipus lead us to focus on mental aspects and traits of the Patriarch; those features that let the researchers regard him as the one suffers from Oedipus complex.

Regarding the idea of Oedipus complex, the boy is filled with the desire of symbolically killing his father and marrying his mother, or it is better to say having a sexual relationship with his mother. Patriarch has no father or his identity is unknown. He might be one of the many that his mother had relation to. Each time the mother wants to recall her memories of the past and tell something about Patriarch’s father and how he was born, the patriarch prevents her: “He [the patriarch] begged her to go to sleep without digging up the past because it was more comfortable for him to believe that those stumbling blocks in national history were feverish delirium, sleep, mother, he begged her, ...” (Marquez, 1975, p. 125).

It was clear for the patriarch that his mother had so many sexual relations with men. One of these unknown men is his father. He is not interested in finding or even talking about his father. The kind of love exists between patriarch and his mother is not a usual one. Thus, it can be symbolically interpreted that the patriarch killed his father at least in his mind, in order to have his mother forever.

The love for his mother was so deep that the patriarch saw the image of his mother “as if painted in oil on both sides of the shroud and it gave off natural fragrance of young flowers that purified the hospital atmosphere of the bedroom and try as they could not erase it from the sheet because it was integrated front and back into the very material of the linen, and it was eternal linen, ...” (Marquez, 1975, p. 126).

Then “he came out of the mist of his mourning, he

came out pale, hard, with a black armband, resoled to make use of all the resources of his authority to attain the canonization of his mother Bendicion Alvarado on the basis of the overwhelming proofs of her qualities as a saint...” (Marquez, 1975, p. 132). He ordered the pop to call his mother a saint. It seems he wanted to erase all her past – her life as a whore- in order to erase the traces of any father in his own life, in this case there will be just a mother and her son; no father: this is similar to what Freud called Oedipus complex, a love for a mother so much that called her a saint and a hatred to the father/fathers, not known in his life.

Due to his deep affection and love to his mother, he remained unmarried when she was alive.

It cannot be possible for the patriarch to have a sexual intercourse with his mother, so he fulfills this desire with any woman in the palace or out he sees. No matter the woman is married or single. Once, he killed the husband resists against the patriarch’s desire to have a sex with his wife. The origin of patriarch’s hatred to men and his desire toward women (from one to the other one) locates in his unconscious aspects of his mind.

Since Patriarch is an oedipal child, he is a joyous child who tries to fulfill his desires by his objects of desires: women of the palace.

It is strange for a president of a country – the most powerful man of a country-to be fulfilled with ordinary women especially those resembles his mother; yet, he could not find the one he desires, unless, we regards him as the one suffers from mental problems.

It is told that he lived more than 200 years, yet, he seems stopped in his childhood. He looks for a mother. Finally he can find her: an ex-nun, Leticia Nazareno. It is the only sexual contact in his life that is not rape. “He simultaneously arrives at the extreme powerlessness of an infant, and has to be cleaned up by Leticia following the sessions.” (Hart Molen, 1979, p. 3)

In addition of being sexually fulfilled, the patriarch also mentally and spiritually fined the one plays the role of a mother for him. She taught him how to read and write, she dressed him like what a mother does. Gradually, Leticia Nazareno gains the power previously owned by the patriarch’s mother. “He had just lunched with Leticia Nazareno and the child who were the only people allowed to sit at his table...” (Marquez, 1975, p. 174)

His love and the sexual fulfillment seem not to be perfect and the correct one that let his children all born as seven-month runts which indicate that surly there is a kind of shortage. That’s the disability of the patriarch in passing the oedipal stage. He couldn’t find a woman to transfer his love of mother to whom. Thus, his wife mostly played the role of a mother to the patriarch instead of being really a true wife.

Interesting to mention that the patriarch “wept with rage” (Marquez, 1975, p. 187) after hearing the “terrible news that Leticia Nazareno and the child had been torn to

pieces and eaten by the stray dogs at the public market..." (186)

Here, the dogs seem to be presented as the absent father who tries to punish his son for his incorrect love for his mother—here replaced with Leticia Nazareno. He cannot kill the dogs, the same as what a son cannot do about his father. The patriarch's feeling toward his father—here the dogs—is a sort of two-sided one. He both loves him—because of being his father, (the Nazareno's and his Son's body are inside the dogs' body) and at the same time hates him because of preventing him for mother's love, (tearing and eating his wife and son). The dogs are the live graves of Leticia and the child, so they are valuable for the patriarch. Simultaneously, they are hatred by him because of being the murderer of them both. This sort of duality is seen in Oedipus complex Freud referred to. From one side the male child loves his father, on the other side he hates him.

For the patriarch the time seems to stand still in his childhood when he was wandering with his mother. He was not able to pass the oedipal stage in his childhood. Always wandering in the palace, searching someone even the dirtiest maidens to be fulfilled by in front of the little runts, the patriarch unconsciously is searching his mother:

...without an instant of hesitation, without a pause, except for the mortal hour of siesta time when he could take refuge in the shade of the concubines, he would choose one by assault, without undressing her or getting undressed himself, without closing the door, and all through the house one could hear his heartless panting of an urgent spouse, the craving tinkle of his gold spur, his dog whimper, the surprise of the woman who wasted her time at love in trying to get ride of the squalid stares of the seven-month runts, ...and it was as if an angel had flown across the skies of the nation, voices were muffled, life came to a halt, everybody remained stone-still with a finger to his lips, not breathing, silence, the general is screwing,...(Marquez, 1975: 8).

Yet, the fact is that the General is not screwing, "those who knew him best had no faith even in the respite of that sacred moment ..." (Marquez, 1975, p. 8).

General seems had no idea of love specifically in his relation with the women. Everything he had done was just out of his power; his power over everything and everybody. "I'll [the General] have her held down by force on the bed with four troopers at her arms and legs while you take care of her with your soup ladle, God damn it, you can take her while she's bulldogged,...even the tightest of them roll around with rage at first and then they beg you don't leave me like this general..." (Marquez, 1975, p. 11).

These sorts of actions and deeds the patriarch had done seem to have origins in his childhood, even in the procedure of his strange birth;

She [patriarch's mother] told him [the patriarch] how her

placenta had been thrown to the hogs, lord, how it was that I could never establish which of so many back trail fugitives was your father, she tried to tell him for history that she had conceived him standing up and with her hat on because of the storm of bluebottle flies around the wineskins of fermented molasses in the back room of a bar, she had given birth to him with difficulty in the entranceway to a convent, she had recognized him in the lights of the melancholy harps of the geraniums....(Marquez, 1975, p. 124).

Looking from oedipal complex view point, the patriarch killed his father in order to marry his mother. There is no name or even a trace of his father in the novel. Just once he is referred to as "no-man's-son" (Marquez, 1975, p. 127). Yet, he had a sort of intensive attraction toward his mother that let her be the only one dares to scold him of his awful odor. She was the only one the patriarch said "yes" to whom (Marquez, 1975, p. 123).

CONCLUSION

Focusing on what Freud called as oedipal complex – the unconscious desire of a male child for killing the father and marrying the mother— the oedipal identity of the patriarch in Garcia Marquez's novel, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* has been studied.

The joyous childish aspect of the General was searching around the palace inside and out in order to be fulfilled by strange sorts of sexual intercourses with any woman he desires but his mother he knows he cannot have this relation with, yet; he is not satisfied. Finally, he can find a woman, Leticia Nazareno, who can play the role of a mother. She teaches him how to read, wrote and even how to control his urinary processes. This is the only time; he has a sexual relation without rape. Yet, the symbolic mother is torn by the symbolic father, the dogs, in order to punish the patriarch for his illegal love to his mother!

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