

REFERENCES TO FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYSIS IN SCHOOLGIRL BY OSAMU DAZAI AND TEN NIGHTS OF DREAMS BY NATSUME SOSEKI

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Abstract: The purpose of the paper is to analyse the books written by Japanese authors, titled Schoolgirl by Ozamu Dasai and Ten Nights of Dreams by Natsume Soseki based on their references to the theories of psychoanalysis developed by its founder, Sigmund Freud. The concepts of free associations, dreams, fantasies, daydreams, the unconscious, are all illustrated in these stories. We can rely for analysis on the way in which the readers perceive the references to psychoanalysis and also the way in which these notions help readers go through their interpretation of the stories by the Japanese authors. Reader-response criticism can include psychoanalysis as part of the readers' background knowledge, allowing them to offer a deep interpretation of these stories. Both stories, by Dazai and Soseki, are about the inner world of the characters. No detail mentioned in these stories is placed accidentally. Each and every detail becomes a part of the entire story, connecting its otherwise apparently disparate elements through free associations, which ensure coherence to the storyline. The way the stories are told remind readers of the Modernist writers' experimental techniques by using the stream of consciousness. The Schoolgirl, due to its one-day duration, reminds readers of Virginia Woolf's novel Mrs Dalloway, with a similar structure of self-exploration and moving backwards and forwards in time. The stream of consciousness itself is built by analogy with free associations.

Keywords: Unconscious, reader-response criticism, free associations, latent content, manifest content.

Ever since there has been the possibility of cultural contact between the Western world and Asian worlds, such as Japan, there has been cultural exchange. Cultural products were considered fascinating by each of the two sides involved in the cultural contact and cultural exchange, which can be expected once the two worlds, in the rough division Western – Asian worlds, are so different. The differences could be seen even more in the past, when traditional clothes and architecture, next to the mindset, values, principles, symbols, and traditions would make the two worlds visually different. Nowadays, in all areas of the world, traditions coexist with modern mindsets, architecture, clothing style and ways of life. In addition, it is no surprise once a discovery in any area of the world has such a strong impact that it changes the way we think about ourselves at an international level. This is the case of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, which is a means of treating neuroses, a means of us becoming aware of what we do not know about ourselves and what we deny about ourselves, namely the unconscious level, as much as it is a tool for analysing and investigating social phenomena, cultural, and artistic products. We have access to the unknown part of our inner world through dreams, through various errors such as speech and action errors, e.g. forgetting to do something, which are called slips of the tongue and parapraxes, as well as through the way we view relationships with the others, the way we react to certain incidents, and, last but not least, through using the free association method, which involves us talking or writing freely, without trying to order our ideas in a logical way, and especially without censoring any thought or emotion.

Literary works can include, to some extent, psychoanalytic content or, at least references to it. Freud believed that the artists rely on the usual raw unconscious contents, which we all have through dreams and fantasies, yet the artists use their gift to polish these contents, and turn it into works of art. The raw unconscious material is just the starting point, the foundation for the further artistic craft. In addition, artists can sublimate their socially unacceptable unconscious wishes and drives by turning them into stories or paintings which

are publicly and socially acceptable, unlike the direct expression of the actual raw unconscious material (Freud, 1983). The unconscious material goes through the work of censorship in dreams as well, when we are sleeping. This is because we activate defenses against wishes and drives which we find unacceptable, immoral, frightening, or otherwise impossible to come to terms with. As we grow up in any society at any given time, we are educated in our family, then in society through public institutions such as schools regarding our norms, rules, and values, and internalize these. Society takes over the role of the superego, or of the moral instance, which had begun with our parents and other adult figures caring for us in our early childhood years. Due to the formation of the superego, we tend to repress certain wishes and drives, and they are pushed into our unconscious. The ego, our conscious part, is divided between the superego, or the moral instance, and the id, the siege of our tendency towards pleasures and satisfying our various instincts, without considering the reality principle or even the moral consequences. Both superego and id belong to our unconscious part of our personality. The ego needs not only to mediate between the two but also, once it does not function properly, it needs to work through analysis in order to uncover the unconscious material hindering the person's actions in order to reach a goal, or to experience pleasure in romantic relationships and a healthy relationship to the real world. It is also the superego that censors certain material from dreams, and this leads to the dreamers' need to make efforts to understand what the meaning of the unconscious material is. A dream has, according to Freud (1900), a latent content and a manifest content. The manifest content is the dream itself as we recall it after we wake up. The latent content is the unconscious contents of the dream, which needs to be deciphered by taking each element of the dream and making free associations to it. In some cases, there can be common dreams with similar meaning for various dreamers, and such dreams can also include symbols whose meaning is universal and is found in world mythologies.

How do the books *Schoolgirl* by Osamu Dazai (originally published in 1939) and *Ten Nights of Dreams* by Natsume Soseki (originally published in 1908) refer to or remind their readers of Freud's psychoanalytic theories?

The book *Schoolgirl* by Osamu Dazai can be considered a very short novel or simply a short story, which is about only one day in the life of a Japanese teenage girl, aged between 15 and 17 years old. Dazai was inspired in writing this story by the diary of a 19-year-old student called Ariake Shizu, who sent it to him during the autumn of 1938. Dazai writes the story from the perspective of the character of the schoolgirl in the title, as a first-person narration. We readers have the impression that the girl is writing in her diary all her thoughts about all the incidents she is going on throughout one day in her life. The story written under a form suggesting one long diary entry is not, however, only about external incidents. The focus is on the way the girl feels about everything going on in her external world, and, thus, on her perception of the world. What is more, she makes various digressions by going back to the past and associating certain incidents in the present with some that have taken place some time ago. As knowledgeable readers of Freud's psychoanalytic theories, we can consider the diary in Dazai's story to be an example of the use of the free associations' technique, as, apparently, the teenage girl is writing freely in her diary, without censoring any of her thoughts. What reminds readers of a diary belonging to a teenage girl illustrates perfectly the natural, spontaneous workings of the mind of a girl this age, which are put down with complete honesty. A diary is written once we start feeling the need to explore ourselves. Adolescence is the first time when we are prone and open to introspection, as we are wondering about who we are, and as we discover our various emotions, thoughts, and reactions to various external events and persons we interact with. We notice that the teenage girl writing the fictional diary in Dazai's story is very honest about each and her every thought and feeling. She goes through moments of self-exploration, which are a natural and frequent phenomenon at her age.

While our readers' perception of the schoolgirl is that she is an insecure and sensitive young girl, she also has some moments when she does not describe herself as a nice person. The way in which she confesses in her diary about preferring one of her dogs over the other, that is crippled, shows us a moment when she is not at all a nice girl:

As I was petting Jappy, I was perfectly aware of Poo next to him, who looked like he was about to start whining. I was also aware that Poo was crippled. I hate how sad Poo is. I can't stand how poor and pathetic he is, and because of that I am cruel to him. Poo looks like a stray dog, so there is no telling when he might get nabbed and killed...Hurry, Poo, go on up into the mountains! No one's going to take care of you, so you may as well die. I'm the kind of girl who will say or do unspeakable things, not just to Poo, but to anyone. I annoy and provoke people. I really am a horrid girl. (Dazai, 2011, 6)

These reflections show us an exercise in total honesty about herself. The girl confesses that sometimes she has evil thoughts and that she is not as innocent and insecure, as well as sensitive, as others may often perceive her. The schoolgirl becomes aware of the contradictions in her behaviour and personality, as she goes through a process of introspection which resembles self-analysis. Knowledgeable readers are aware of the way in which the body and the brain go through a series of very fast changes during a time of very fast development during our teenage years. New brain connections are created and, in the process, a variety of emotions which are also very intense can appear. However, next to the physical development consequences and explanations on the schoolgirl's rapidly shifting moods, we can also consider the psychological dimension. We may not control ourselves and behave according to social norms and values, conforming to them at all times. This is normal, regardless of what age we are. However, during our teenage years, non-conformity and rebellion against what we had always been told is proper is a usual and normal phenomenon. In not conforming to the moral expectations, the schoolgirl shows that she has the freedom to be herself and to explore herself, as she feels, and not as she struggles to behave in order for the others to approve of her thoughts, emotions, and behaviour. While readers are familiar with the idea that caring for animals and being kind to them is a form of making proof of empathy and sympathy, which are traits that make us normal from a psychological point of view, we start thinking that the behaviour of the girl is temporary and not pathological. While she shows no sympathy for the crippled dog, she does love the other dog and does not torture any of them. She simply behaves less nicely to the crippled dog and lets her thoughts and emotions flow in an honest, uncensored way. We readers may also consider that the crippled dog may symbolize for her the way in which she feels in society, alone and insecure. Once someone feels alone and insecure, they may consider that they are rejected by the others. It is a usual experience during our teenage years to feel isolated or misunderstood, or to have difficulties in finding our place in society. Rapidly changing moods are also a usual part of adolescence, which makes the schoolgirl's apparently contradictory emotions and behaviours ranging from insecure to being mean to the others as nothing surprising.

The schoolgirl writes about the personal meaning her personal belongings such as her glasses have for her:

My glasses are the thing I hate most about my face, but there are certain good things about glasses that other people might not understand. I like to take my glasses off and look out into the distance. Everything goes hazy, as in a dream, or like a zoetrope—it's wonderful. I can't see anything that's dirty. Only big things—vivid intense colors and light are all that enters my vision...What's more, when my glasses are off, I don't ever think about arguing with

anyone at all, nor do I feel the need to make snide remarks. All I do is just blankly stare in silence. (Dazai, 2011, 5)

In writing in such a detailed way about how she feels insecure about wearing glasses, and also about how wearing them can make her be able to retreat safely in her inner world, we realize how these descriptions are a perfect example of free associations. Starting from her having to wear glasses, we gain insight into what is seriously preoccupying her about herself: her lack of self-confidence, as well as her need for introspection and taking some time to have privacy, to be alone with herself, and to be able to fantasize, daydream, or reflect on herself. The main idea in the free associations related to the glasses is a very intense need of the schoolgirl for introspection and understanding how she feels and, eventually, who she is, a question that is implied to seek for answers throughout her story.

The very beginning of the schoolgirl's story introduces us into her inner world, by starting from free associations she does over the word morning:

Waking up in the morning is always interesting. It reminds me of when we're playing hide-and-seek—I'm hidden crouching in the pitch-dark closet and suddenly Deko throws open the sliding door, sunlight pouring in as she shouts, "Found you!"—that dazzling glare followed by an awkward pause, and then, my heart pounding as I adjust the front of my kimono and emerge from the closet, I'm slightly self-conscious and then suddenly irritated and annoyed—it feels similar, but no, not quite like that, somehow even more unbearable. (Dazai, 2011, 4)

The comparison of waking up in the mornings with the hide-and-seek game can suggest to us readers a scene which symbolizes the search for herself for the schoolgirl. The paragraph quoted above can make an allusion to the question: "Who am I?" which we start asking ourselves during our teenage years and, further on, during various moments of psychological crises in our lives, which can be related to the passage from one life stage to another or to some events in our personal lives to which we react intensely. The exclamation, "Found you!" (Dazai, 2011, 4) can suggest, figuratively, a moment of illumination. In this paragraph, the schoolgirl presents abstract reflections converted into real-life scenes which we can easily visualize, but which suggest a deeper level of meaning beyond the surface level. The beginning of every day reminds the schoolgirl of her intense feelings, such as feeling "irritated and annoyed" (Dazai, 2011, 4) like during the moment when she is exposed during a hide and seek game. Indeed, throughout the day, the schoolgirl is exposed as she interacts socially with passers-by or other passengers in the subway.

At the same time, readers who are knowledgeable in psychoanalysis may consider the phonetic similarity between the word *morning* and another word, meaning something completely different, *mourning*. As the schoolgirl mentions that mornings are associated with sadness, pessimism, emptiness, next to the lack of confidence, we realize that all these free associations lead her to thinking about her father, about whom we later find out that he is dead at the present moment when she has these moments of introspection. The following fragment illustrates how free associations bring us to the issues that are significant to us, and how we get closer and closer to them, while at first we are not aware why we feel in a certain way and why we use certain words:

Mornings seem forced to me. So much sadness rises up, I can't bear it. I hate it, I really do. I'm an awful sight in the morning. My legs feel so exhausted that, already, I don't want to do a thing. I wonder if it's because I don't sleep well. It's a lie when they say you feel healthy in the morning. Mornings are grey. Always the same. Absolutely empty. Lying in bed each

morning, I'm always so pessimistic. It's awful, really. All kinds of terrible regrets converge at once in my mind, and my heart stops up as I writhe in agony. Mornings are torture.

"Father," I tried calling out softly. (Dazai, 2011, 4)

The last sentence in the paragraph quoted above, where the girl calls her father, seems broken away from the context, yet her calling her father becomes after other intermingled thoughts in no logical order finish, and readers make the necessary connections when they read the following statement: "The reality of Father's death felt strange to me" (Dazai, 2011, 4). Next to her feeling lack of confidence and sadness in the mornings, therefore, come the reasons as to why she feels this way. One keyword is *glasses*, and the other one *father*. She associates the glasses with her appearance and, as reader further on can imply, with the social masks she wears when she interacts with various other people, with her mother, with her teachers, school colleagues, friends invited over by her mother, with passengers on the bus, with her dogs, and so on. Eventually, she wonders, as we readers understand, who she is outside all of these roles she has to perform every day. She associates her father with loss, sadness, pain, as well as with the denial of his loss, which are all part of the stages of grief work (Freud, 1917).

We readers notice how, gradually, the schoolgirl becomes more and more aware of her associations with the mornings, as we gain insight into reasons for her feelings together with her:

That he had died—passed away—seemed impossible to understand. I couldn't wrap my head around it. I missed my older sister, or people I used to be friends with, or people I hadn't seen in a long time. I cannot stand mornings because it seems I am always bleakly reminded of long-gone times, and people I used to know, and their presences feel eerily close, like the scent of pickled radish that you just can't get rid of. (Dazai, 2011, 6)

The schoolgirl confesses that she could not accept the fact that her father had died. We have previously witnessed her calling him during the morning the story begins, only to find out, a bit later, that her father was no longer alive. Why do mornings remind her of the past and of people no longer present, yet still feeling very much close to her? Next to the phonetic similarity between *morning* and *mourning*, we can consider the fact that mornings are that time of day when we just wake up from sleep and, likely, from various dreams. We are in a state in-between feeling asleep and feeling awake, which is a moment of the day when we are more open towards fantasizing and daydreaming. It is a time when the boundaries between sleep and awakening, or reality and fantasy, are blurred. For the schoolgirl, the absence of her glasses can blur reality, making a reference to the way in which she feels in the mornings before wearing them and, thus, before truly getting into contact with the real world. At the same time, mornings are a time of implied introspection, when the schoolgirl is alone and can focus on her thoughts and feelings before starting on her day.

Even when the schoolgirl reflects on the opposite characters of her parents, as her mother is highly sociable and as her father was more isolated from social interactions and more prone to study, readers notice how these reflections imply her own concerns over the way she feels like she related to the world, and readers understand she is more introverted, like her father:

Mother, who was very busy arranging someone's marriage, had gone out early this morning. Ever since I was little, Mother had devoted herself to other people, so I was used to it by now, but it really was amazing how she was constantly in motion. She impressed me. Father had done nothing but study, so it fell to Mother to take up his part. Father was far

removed from things like social interactions, but Mother really knew how to surround herself with lovely people. The two of them seemed an unlikely pairing, but there had been a mutual respect between them. (Dazai, 2011, 6)

One of her concerns may be how to reconcile her need for privacy and introspection, her natural way of being introverted with the need to not feel isolated from the others and to be able to easily interact with them. The girl feels at times distracted from the social interaction, and feels as if needing to retreat into her inner world: "I'd be sitting there, talking to someone. My gaze would wander to a corner of the table and affix itself there, unmoving. Only my mouth would move" (Dazai, 2011, 7). She may feel that she cannot connect well with the others and that she does not belong there, unable to establish genuine, honest, meaningful communication with them.

Based on its structure and contents, *The Schoolgirl* reminds readers who are familiar with psychoanalysis of *A Young Girl's Diary* (Paul et al, 2006), originally published in 1919, including diary entries of an anonymous young girl from the ages of 12 to 14 years old, and which benefits from a preface by Sigmund Freud. A similar inner world of a young teenage girl, with similar concerns is presented through the pages of *A Young Girl's Diary*. Another intertextual reference, or reference to another text which readers can identify in *The Schoolgirl* is, this time, a literary one, that of *Mrs Dalloway*, a novel by Virginia Woolf, which shares the same focus on the inner world, on one day in the life of the main character, Clarissa Dalloway, and a writing style similar to the one inspired by free association in Dazai's story called the stream of consciousness, an experimental Modernist writing technique. The stream of consciousness deals away with logic, coherence, chronological order of the plot and focuses on the way in which the mind naturally functions, spontaneously, just like in *The Schoolgirl*.

Ten Nights of Dreams by Natsume Soseki presents us readers with ten dreams, or ten stories based on dreams. We may be aware of the fact that dreams are not as coherent as a story and, therefore, the dreams in this book are clearly polished, and worked through in order to be coherent and meaningful. While each dream is treated as an independent story, which has meaning in itself and not only in connection with the other stories, we notice, just like in the dream universe of any dreamer, some recurrent motifs: loss of someone dear, mourning, the stages of grief work, love, relationships between parents and children. Dreams are an occasion to blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy, and also to introduce us into a fabulous world, similar to the one of fairy-tales, myths, legends, and folk beliefs. We are, however, as readers, introduced right away in the context in which the story takes place, namely that it is a dream. "I dream" (Soseki, 2015, 27) is the beginning sentence of the first dream, titled *The First Night*. The world in this first short story is not completely an imaginary one, and, thus, not a world completely removed from the real one. It is a world related to our psychological reality, just as all the other dreams presented in this book are, and just like all dreams we usually have at night are. Daydreams can also fulfill the same function, of expressing our unconscious wishes, fears, and other feelings. In the first short story, the dreamer stays together with a beautiful woman who is dying. He hopes that maybe she would not die, but as the reality of her death becomes clear, the two lovers agree for him to wait for her for one hundred years to meet again. She makes reference to the red sun that sets and then rises again. Like in fairy-tales, or like in poems, the dreamer digs her grave with a shell including a mother pearl. The red sun is a specific symbol of Japan, and it is in this way that the sun is seen and represented in Asian art. The hope to see the loved one again is a natural wish and can be symbolic of grief work.

The short story *The Third Night* once again deals with grief work, yet this story is about a father and his son. The father carries his blind son on his back. The son is not clearly a child, an adult, and not even a human being, making reference to the strange way in which boundaries

are blurred between reality and fantasy in dreams and in fairy-tales. The idea that the son is heavy and is a burden, presented literally in the dream, has as a correspondent a figurative meaning, related to the way in which it was hard for a father to take care of a blind son. The son reminds the father how some time ago he had abandoned him in the forest, for being a burden. The dream thus serves as a reminder of the guilt the father still feels about this.

Still another short story related to grief work is *The Ninth Night*, where a mother and a son are waiting for their husband and father to return. The mother takes her young son with her to a temple where she prays for him and performs various rituals, being worried about her husband. However, the narrator ends this story up by mentioning that his mother had told him that the father and husband had been killed by a samurai without a master while the mother was praying and hoping for his return together with her son. Readers may believe that the mother was in denial and would not accept the death of her husband, refusing to believe he would never return. In addition, readers realize that the dreamer is the child who is now an adult and who had been impressed by the loss of his father in his childhood.

Suicide appears as a topic in the short stories *The Second Night* and *The Seventh Night*. In the *The Second Night*, the main character narrating the dream is a samurai who is told by the priest that he needs to attain enlightenment. The priest mocks him for not having been able to do so until now and asks the samurai for proof after he attains enlightenment. The samurai believes that if he attains enlightenment, he would kill the priest or, if he does not, he would kill himself, since he cannot deal with such a humiliation as a samurai. He does not manage to achieve enlightenment, and kills himself with a dagger. This short story, as a dream, could be related to the process of transformation. Death in dreams means, from a psychological and psychoanalytical point of view, personal change. The samurai feels the need to change, a change which would be achieved by attaining enlightenment. His thinking about killing the priest if he achieved enlightenment could be related to the dreamer's wish for the priest to change his opinion about him. *The Seventh Night* is a dream about the dreamer being on board of a "massive ship" (Soseki, 2015, 35). The dreamer narrating this story does not feel comfortable as he does not know what the destination of the ship is, and whether or not it is going towards the West, as it seems to him that the ship is "concerned to chase the setting sun" (Soseki, 2015, 49). The figurative meaning of the ship going to an uncertain destination can be that of the life of the dreamer, and the direction towards the West, towards the setting sun, could symbolize the way towards death. The sailors laugh at the narrator's questions about the ship's destination and about his idea of noticing the ship going after the setting sun, which makes him symbolize an alienated man, whose ideas, thoughts and feelings are not understood. He decides to kill himself by jumping off the ship. This gesture could signify, in the language of dream interpretation, the need to put an end to a certain phase in his life. He may be wishing to feel that he is in control of his life and knows precisely the destination towards he is heading.

The book by Natsume Soseki can be considered an illustration of the free associations technique as well. The dreams are only starting points for further reflections and fantasy elaboration, in a manner reminding of the use of active imagination by Carl Jung. The book can be considered a series of fantasies that are written down, and that the dream material is just the raw, starting point for further development of the writer's creativity.

Both books, *Schoolgirl* by Osamu Dazai and *Ten Nights of Dreams* by Natsume Soseki are creative examples of using free associations, dream interpretation, and creative imagination. Dazai and Soseki are artists, who clearly bring their own artistic contribution to the raw materials of the unconscious. While readers are aware that these works are fiction and not genuine psychoanalytic cases materials, produced by patients or by persons going through self-analysis, these works do offer us insight into how free associations can work so that we can use them to identify recurring themes and concerns in our process of reflection. Grief work and its stages of denial and not accepting the loss in particular is another topic dealt with in

psychoanalysis and which is present in both books by Dazai and Soseki. A clearer picture over psychoanalytic concepts can be extracted from reading these two works of fiction.

The analysis has been carried out based on reader-response criticism (Mart, 2019), as a larger methodological framework, which includes the notions about psychoanalysis as part of the readers' background knowledge. Readers can also reflect on the books by Soseki and Dazai based on their own emotional reactions, as well as personal experience, next to their background of cultural knowledge about psychoanalysis and literature.

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