

Full Length Article**Open Access****Code: 1351****A Psychoanalytic Reading of Dawit Wendmagegn's Novel "Alamanor"**Amanuel Genetu¹, Teshome Egere², Yemaneberhan Kelemework³

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Abstract

This article is a psychoanalytic reading of Dawit Wendmagegn's novel 'Alamanor'. The objectives of the study are to analyze the unconscious motives and defense mechanism used by the characters in the novel. To achieve these objectives, textual analysis is made where extracts selected from the novel are critically examined. The extracts are selected depending on the meaning they carry from psychoanalytic perspectives and hence are critically analyzed from a specific angle, namely psychoanalytic literary critical approach. Common psychoanalytic notions like the id, ego and superego and defense mechanism are used to frame the analysis. After critical analysis is made, it is found out that for the present actions and lives of Adult characters in the novel, their past experiences and unconscious motives played determining factor. In relation to this, the psychoanalytical notion of 'childhood experience leads to adulthood personality' was also found to be true in the case of the characters in the novel. It is also found out that to repress the unconscious motives and drives, characters have used defense mechanism such as displacement and regression. Based on the finding, it is recommended that through literature we can get insight to the lives of characters in the fictional narratives. It is also recommended that as characters are representatives of human beings and that the psychological notions of characters have huge implications for human beings, parents should work on how they are treating their children because any action that the child faces could have a huge impact on his/her adult personality.

Keywords: /Defense/Ego/Id/Superego/Unconscious/Corresponding authors e-mail: asegere@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Psychoanalysis was emerged as a medical treatment. It is a theory founded by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), as a means to cure mental illness through a one on one session between a patient and a psychiatrist. Freud attempted to let his patients speak more about themselves in the course of which they get released anxiety or stress repressed in their unconscious. This enabled Freud got a new insight that people suffer from illness which is beyond anatomy and can also be cured by telling their story. In the course of telling their history, patients transfer stress and anxiety to a listener; the latter in this case is an analyst. Freud named method a “talking cure” Waugh (2006, p. 499). As he went on treating his patients, he realized the force of narration as it has a power in transferring one’s wound to others. Consequently, he understood the power narrative texts had and began examining classical oral narratives such as Sophocles' ‘Oedipus Rex’ from which he derived a famous concept called “Oedipus Complex”, a concept which refers to “...the sexual desire that a young boy feels for his mother and the rivalry and hostility the child correspondingly feels towards his father” Murfin and Ray (2003, p. 314). Our concern is not the sexuality trajectory, but the relationship psychoanalysis and literature has; the former in determining characters action and the latter in portraying the life of characters. This created a profound opportunity to relate both oral and written literary narratives to be seen as a source for psychoanalytic literary criticism. Considering these facts, we can understand that psychoanalysis is highly related to literature.

Freud also changed the old belief that the human psyche is a single entity to that it is rather composed of three very different parts. These three parts are: "id", "ego" and "superego". The id is a part of the psyche from which instinctual desires are originated. It is a component part governed by pleasure principle. The ego is the one that moderates between the id and superego providing contexts of reality and hence governed by reality principle. The third and the opposite of the id is the superego which carries mores and norms of the society and dominated by sense of morality. The superego is governed by the morality principle. These three aspects of the mind have different goals and desires and operate according to different principles. As a child grows older, the superego attempts to dominate a mind because of some cultural and social norms. Consequently, sexual impulses, unfulfilled wishes and guilty desires are repressed in the unconscious part of a brain. As characters are representatives of human beings, the psychological notions taking part in them can also be reflected in these fictional beings. Complementing this, Tyson (2006, p. 16) writes that psychoanalytic literary criticism can be used to reveal these and what she calls ‘core issues’ like ‘fear of intimacy, fear of abandonment, fear of betrayal, low self-esteem, insecure sense of self and Oedipus complex’.

Humm (1994) writes about how the concepts that Freud has raised are very important to the literary criticism from the perspectives of psychoanalysis for several reasons. First, Freudian concepts describe arrangements and give explanations for the way in which characters behave. Second, Freud expresses the importance of pleasure and desire

in the development of the individual psyche, and he marks out ways in which these instincts could be understood through an analysis of metaphor and metonymy.

Eagleton (1996) explains that using psychoanalytic literary critical approach we can analyze an author since works of literature are believed to be the manifestation of the writers' psyche. It is also possible to analyze a reader as it is contended that there is energy in written words which are transferred to a reader and hence the reader's past experience is relived. What is more, one can also analyze the unconscious motives of characters as they are representation of real life.

In Ethiopia, there are studies on psychoanalytic literary works, but most of them are on English literary works. Even though there are some studies conducted on Amharic novels, they are far behind because of an increasing number of novels published. What is more, the studies conducted from psychoanalytic perspective focus on the style of a text and the psychological impact of patriarchal ideology and how to subvert it (kindly see statement of the problem section). However, this study focuses on how core issues repressed in characters determine the present life and action of characters and how characters use defense mechanisms in repressing the core issues. This, indeed initiated the authors to critically examine an Amharic novel አለመኖር 'Alamanor' (2016) by Dawit Wendemagegn.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

According to Tyson (2006, p. 11), whether we realize it or not psychoanalytic concepts are part of our daily lives, and therefore psychoanalytic thinking should have the advantage of familiarity. Inferiority complex and defense mechanism are very familiar words that many people feel like commonly knowing them, without having any scientific understanding. The problem with these common definitions is that they are taken simply so i.e. they are considered superficial and meaningless behaviors. To avoid the misunderstanding that Tyson has put, there needs research.

Currently, there are researches conducted on psychoanalytic literary criticism in Ethiopia, but they are mostly on English novels like Kedist Belete's (2012) a "Psychoanalytic Feministic Criticism of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with Its Possibility of Patriarchal Subversion". Regardless of the fact that Kedist contributed towards literary critical endeavor, for one thing, Kedist's work has dealt with English novel produced in different historical and geographical context. For the other thing, Kedist has focused on "feminist psychoanalytic" approach. As per the approach, she has geared her study towards gender difference and has attempted to unravel patriarchal ideology and how to subvert it. Our study is different from Kedist's in that it has focused more on the psychodynamic notions than gendered ideologies. Secondly, ours has focused on Amharic novel written very recently which is set in different socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts.

The other work studied from psychological perspective is "Narrative Technique of *Gracha Qachiloch: Stream-of-Consciousness in Focus*" by Hiwot Walelign (2012). The emphasis of this study has been on 'Stream-of-Consciousness' as a narrative technique. The focus is more on style not content. However, ours has focused on the content such as

the latent contents of the unconscious, defense mechanism and the three psychoanalytic components: id, ego, and superego. It is apparent that psychoanalytic literary criticism is dynamic and evolving too. If Amharic novels are critically examined using this approach, varieties of insights can be generated which will contribute to the knowledge of Amharic literature. It is with this felt need that this study is attempted to be conducted. This initial understanding initiated the researchers to conduct further research on a novel አለመኖር 'Alamanor' (2016) by Dawit Wendemagegn. The reason why the novel አለመኖር (hereafter called 'Alamanor'), is chosen is because there are recurrent psychoanalytic notions in it. Moreover, there is no research conducted on the novel. The presence of this study could contribute to fill the knowledge and methodological gap created. To this end, this study attempts to answer the following research questions.

1. What unconscious motives (repressed wounds, unresolved conflicts, guilt, or desire) are depicted in the novel?
2. How are unconscious motives operate in the novel?
3. What defense mechanisms are used by the characters?
4. How defense mechanism works to repress the contents of unconscious in the novel?

2. Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, different scholarly views about psychoanalytic literary criticism are presented to theoretically frame the study. In relation to psychoanalytic literary critical theorists, the works of Freud, Eagleton, and Tyson are all briefly presented to enable us frame our analysis. Moreover, different studies conducted are also presented. These studies were surveyed by the researchers to find a gap to conduct a research.

Psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalytic approach towards an interpretation of literary texts. According to Eagleton (1996), psychoanalysis has three different but related analyses. The first is it studies and analyzes a particular artist or author. In this case the author's biography can be a lot of help since a literary work is seen as a manifestation of his or her unconscious mind. Psychoanalysis also enables to analyze the readers, because the choice of one reader is different from another. The third and most common one and which is the focus of this study is a psychoanalysis of characters which includes their unconscious motives, defense mechanism they use to repress "core issues", to borrow Tyson's phrase (2006) (Griffith, 2006).

In his study of human personality, Freud comes up with different terms related to how the human mind functions and the motives of the human behavior. For him, human behavior revolves around psychosexual stages and defense mechanisms. He introduced two main psychosexual dynamic based on his observation. For example, Oedipal complex is a stage that occurs during the phallic stage of a child, where a child has a sexual feeling towards the parent with opposite sex. In this case a boy would have a sexual desire to his mother and jealousy and anger to his father, which is called Oedipus complex. On the other hand, a girl has sexual feeling for her father, and develops jealousy and anger towards her mother, which is called, Electra complex. These feelings are repressed as the child

matures. Any adult will not remember or know that he or she had these feelings when she/he was a child (Freud, 1963).

Another scholar who associated the psychological notions reflected in human beings to characters in the fictional world is Terry Eagleton. He contends that works of literature can be seen as a dream because it is the manifestation of the subconscious. By studying and interpreting different symbols of the work, we can get insight to the mind of the author, not only this but also, we can understand the underlying motives, unresolved conflicts, and desires of characters (Eagleton, 1996).

As to Tyson, a grown-up person or an adult is mostly in search of a love mate who is a lot like his/her parent. When a certain child grows up, the unconscious of that child will need a love mate which has a lot of similarities with the child's late parent, from whom he or she lost love and attention. If the child is a boy, as an adult or as a man he needs a woman who has a lot in common with his mother, and if the child is a girl, when she becomes a woman, she needs a man who has a significant similarity with her father. Here comes the concept of Electra complex which refers to "the situation in which a girl feels desire for her father" (Murfin & Ray, 2003, p. 314). When a girl finds a mate that could possibly have similarity with her father, she would not notice that because she is unlikely to want to date him if she is conscious of his similarity with her father. This is because it is socially and morally wrong to want a parent in sexual ways, but it does not mean there will not be any feeling, it just means the feelings are repressed in the unconscious part of the mind. If her father was smoker and negligent, she would possibly end up with finding a mate who is also addicted to smoking. But if the mate treats her in a proper way and loves her unlike her father, then she will lose interest in him because she is not experiencing the abandonment she is used to. So, the man who is not like her father cannot fill her empty spot which was created by the loss of love from her father.

The other issue related to Electra complex is, a girl that used to compete with her mother for the father's affection and love; the unconscious desire will develop even long after one or both parents are dead and the girl or currently a woman, will unconsciously try to find, a man who is married or currently in relationship. This attachment of the man with other woman, will allow her to replay the competition with her mother; this time she will try to win, but if she succeeds in winning, she will lose interest in him. If as a child she won her father's affection from her father, she will be interested in a man who is married and very unlikely to leave the wife, because she believes she needed to be punished for stealing the father from her mother (Tyson, 2006).

According to Tyson, boys who are unconsciously in competition with their father for the mother, mostly categorize girls as 'bad girl' and 'good girl'. These boys associate sexual desire with their mom. So, for their mother is a standard to measure the quality of other girls, they only enjoy sex with the ones whom they label as 'bad girls' who are not 'like their mom'. Contrary to this, they refrain from enjoying sex with good girls as they consider them 'like their mom'. In this case there is abandonment, where they are going to abandon the 'bad girl' because she is unworthy of marriage and unfit to be categorized with 'moms'. While in the case of the good girl, there are two possible outcomes. The first is she will become 'bad girl' which will make her unworthy of commitment so they will eventually abandon her. The second is the man will feel guilty of wanting her sexually because it would be like wanting his mother sexually. So, he will not enjoy sex even if he stays with her. Men with this situation are likely to cheat with 'bad girls' (Tyson, 2006).

2.1 The Unconscious

Tyson (2006) writes that the existence of the unconscious is central to all psychoanalytic thinking. According to her, it is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges and memories that are outside of the conscious awareness. Most of the contents of the unconscious are unacceptable and unpleasant such as anxiety, conflict and feeling of pain. She also mentioned what Freud describes as the unconscious continues to influence our behavior and experience, even though we are not aware of these underlying influences. It is our unawareness of it, and if we know it, not realizing it that gives it control over us. No one is completely free from psychological problem, because we all have psychological history that begin from childhood, and our parents, and develops in the adulthood. Regarding what unconscious carries, Tyson (2006, p. 15) writes, "The unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them." The unconscious comes into being when we are very young through repression. However, repression does not eliminate the feelings it rather gives them force to control our action in our current life. She also discusses that if we had a problem with our late parents, we are likely to try to find the love and care we did not get from them, from our beloved ones. But, since we did not mostly realize it, we concentrate on the other superficial things. Most people do not want to admit this kind of claims so they focus on the differences that their parents and their beloved ones have (Tyson, 2006).

According to Wright (1986, p.86), whatever our attitude towards psychoanalysis is, it is proved that most of our daily decisions are governed by motivation that we are not in control of, and unaware too. The contents of unconscious manifest themselves through dream because when we sleep, the unconscious have total control over our mental state. Hence, in dream the repressed wounds, desires and unresolved conflicts of the unconscious are transmitted in the latent content of the dream not in the manifest content. The unconscious contains instinctual drives, especially childhood wishes, which try to get through consciousness and be active. But they usually become dreams, jokes, and slips of tongues because they are not an acceptable part of 'normal' civilized behavior.

2.2 Structural Model of Personality

Freud is the first to theorize the structure of personality. In his theory Freud explains that each person's personality is composed of three parts. These are named as id, ego and superego. To begin with, id is arranged to store sexual and aggressive wishes, which Freud called drives. It exists starting from birth, and it allows the infant to get what he/she wants. This aspect of personality is entirely unconscious and filled with instinctive and primitive wishes and behaviors. According to Freud, the id is driven by the pleasure principle, which makes it require immediate gratification of all desires and needs. If those needs and desires are not gratified, the immediate result will be anxiety and tension. The id wants whatever feels good at the time without any consideration of other circumstances of the situation. It is devoted to gratify sexual and other socially forbidden conventions (Lodge, 2000).

The ego is a component of personality that is responsible for dealing with reality. As cited in Lodge (2000), Freud contends that ego develops from id and ensures that the impulses of id can be expressed in acceptable manner in the real world. The ego operates

based on the reality principle which strives to satisfy the impulses of id in a realistic and socially acceptable manner. The reality principle weighs the cost and benefit of an action before deciding to act up on or abandon impulses. In many cases the id's impulses can be satisfied through delayed gratification, that is the ego will allow the behavior, but only in appropriate time and place. The ego represents reason and common sense. It is said to serve three masters, the external world, the id and the superego.

The superego is the part of personality that represents the conscious part of human mind. It is developed from the moral and ethical restraints that is put on us by our caregivers and the society, so it is driven by the moral principle. It dictates our belief of right and wrong. It is an aspect of personality that holds all of our internalized moral standards and ideas that we acquire from both our parents and society. According to Freud, superego starts at the age of five. It acts to perfect and civilize our behavior. It suppresses unacceptable urges of id and struggle to make the ego act upon idealistic standards than realistic principles (Lodge, 2000).

2.3 Defense Mechanism

Tyson (2006), by citing Freud, writes that defense is the process by which the contents of repressed wounds, guilt desires and wishes are kept in the unconscious. In other words, it is the process by which we keep the repressed, repressed to avoid knowing what we feel we cannot handle knowing. This means there are things in the unconscious which our conscious mind cannot accept, and if we reveal those things, we may hate ourselves or our perception about ourselves may change. Defense mechanisms are not necessarily direct or conscious. They minimize the tension and anxiety by covering up the impulses that are threatening. This in broad sense is 'sublimation,' in which socially unacceptable manners and desires are consciously converted to socially accepted manners. Other defense mechanisms include elective perception, selective memory, denial, avoidance, displacement, projection, regression, rationalization and many others.

Selective perception is the mechanism by which we hear and see only what we feel we can handle. Sometimes things we hear or see triggers anxiety and conflict between the id and the superego. When this happens, the ego will try to use selective perception as a defense mechanism, by hearing and seeing only things that does not bring anxiety on. Another defense mechanism is selective memory which deals with the modification of our memory or our forgetting bad events which we don't want to remember entirely. Not to be overwhelmed by painful events of the past, we unconsciously use this defense. It does not mean that bad memories will be totally deleted, but the ego will not make it consciously known. A defense mechanism which is related to telling oneself that the problem or unpleasant event does not exist is denial. It is a refusal to accept the reality of something that generates anxiety by blocking it from consciousness or by becoming involved in a wish-fulfilling fantasy. When bad things that could create anxiety happen, denial can be used as a defense mechanism by consciously denying the fact that the problem exists, but unconsciously there is still the problem that has created the anxiety.

Avoidance is the mechanism we use to stay away from things or people who could make us anxious, by waking repressed experiences and emotions. It is a refusal to become involved with subjects that are distressing because they are connected to unconscious sexual or aggressive impulses. Because we know those things could pull anxiety into the surface, we tend to avoid things in a manner that does not make us uncomfortable.

The other defense mechanism is displacement which redirects sexual, aggressive desires or behaviors, on to someone or something safer than the original that cause the anxiety. In other word, as Tyson said, it is “taking it out” on someone or something less threatening than the one who caused us the fear, frustration, or anger. When a threatening force cause us anxiety, fear or anger, we mostly find it difficult to respond or ‘take it out’ on them because we believe that they are more powerful force than us, and responding to that may actually make things worse. But when we find a safer or what we believe as a less powerful, we take our anger on them (Tyson, 2006).

Furthermore, there is another defense mechanism known as projection which refers to seeing one’s failing in others as a way of convincing oneself that others also have this problem of failing. We can also say that it is giving fear, guilty desires, and emotions as characteristics of others to deny that we have them ourselves. Since criticizing ourselves of failing creates anxiety, we mostly tend to share our failings and mistakes as common mistakes and failing with others. If the failing is shared by others, we believe that it is ok to make mistakes, but if we believe it is only our failure, we will criticize ourselves which leads to anxiety.

Last but not least, regression is a defense mechanism when a person tries to relive a past experience, it can be pleasant or painful experience, to escape the problem at the present time. Not to think about the current unpleasant situation, we try to bring or relive the state where we felt safe and sound previous.

In sum, the unconscious is a dynamic entity of our mental state in which wounds, guilt desires, unresolved conflicts are repressed. If these core issues got an outlet they easily disrupt our conscious mind and we may go even beyond anxiety and may tend to be narcissistic or else psychotic. To avoid such disruptions, as seen in this section, different defense mechanisms such as regression, denial, displacement (transference), projection and many others are created in order to repress the reliving of core issues.

3. Material and Methods

Under this section materials and methods were discussed. These include, research design, material selection and analytical procedures.

3.1 Research design

Qualitative approach has been employed as it best fits to this study for the main objective of this study is to examine the psychodynamics of characters in the selected novel. How people come to make sense of the world and carry out their everyday lives is a central question that qualitative approach addresses. Qualitative approach also focuses on behaviours, interactions, feelings and symbols to uncover the meaning embedded in them. In other words, one of the major uses of qualitative methods is to explore phenomena and experiences from the perspectives of subjects experiencing them. In view of these, since characters are subjects in a given text, examining their experiences, speech actions, and exploring their “thoughts”, “feelings” or “behaviours” could make literary criticism a scientific study.

3.2 Material Selection

The researchers have selected an Amharic novel ‘*Alamanor*’ by Dawit Wendemagegn. The dominant reason to select the novel is because the novel contains thematically recurrent psychoanalytic notions, like defense mechanism, and unconscious motives, such as anxiety, fear, desire, repressed wounds and unresolved conflicts. Moreover, the novel is new so it is unexplored. The researchers selected the author purposively since the author is medical doctor of mental health; the chances that his life style will influence are believed to be high.

3.3 Analytical Procedures

Before directly engaging to analyze the novel, the researchers framed the study with theoretical concepts that guides the text analysis. Since the analysis is textual analysis, the text, which in this case is the novel, had been critically read. Then, data or extracts from the novel were selected and translated to English as well. As it is a literary translation, it is not easy to transfer the exact information to the targeted language. To minimize the gap, the three researchers were made to come up with their own translation. After that they brought what they individually translated to one desk and took the translation which is best closer in meaning to the source language. Then, the data were analyzed and interpreted from psychoanalytic point of view. More specifically, notions such as core issues, defense mechanism were closely examined.

4 Results and Discussion

The novel ‘*Alamanor*’ is analyzed from psychoanalytic perspective especially based on notions such as unconscious motives and defense mechanism. The first one deals with critical analysis of character’s unconscious motives or contents of the unconscious such as unresolved conflict and guilt as they are influencing the adult characters. The second one is defense mechanism used by characters in the novel. To begin with, it is important to give a brief plot summary of the novel. Consequently, an analysis of characters’ unconscious motives will be analyzed; this will be followed by analysis of defense mechanisms such as displacement, regression, and denial which are used by characters in the novel to repress the contents of the unconscious.

4.1 Plot summary of the Novel ‘*Alamanor*’

The novel begins introducing one of the main characters Desta. He is a medical doctor and also a university instructor in Addis Ababa University. His full personality is revealed through flashback and foreshadowing. His perspective towards life is different from other characters. He preaches his ideology whenever and wherever he finds a chance to, mostly in the classroom where he teaches medicine. His philosophy is, ‘living begins from scaring of not living’ (Dawit, 2016, p31). When he is asked to elaborate this idea, he

says, ‘when we were in our mother’s womb, we never worry about breathing, eating or working, because we did not have to, but as soon as we got born, all those things become necessary’.

The next character we get introduced to is Kibru, a colleague of Desta. He is respected and feared as an instructor and as a medical doctor. He always worries about what people think of him. He is obsessed of being number one in everything. He is mostly successful and because of this he is so proud of himself. He is born with something covering, which is in Amharic called ‘*Kirtas*’ (a sign on the body of a person), and it is considered a sign of specialty. His father is proud of this. The people of his previous village also see him as a special one, but things changed dramatically when they move to a new place where no one knows anything about Kibru or his father. The village boys bully him and Kibru then swears to himself that he must be number one in everything.

Another character we find in the novel is Wubit, who works in the same department with Kibru. She is young and beautiful. She is a friend of Desta too. In fact, Kibru thinks of her as a disciple of Desta, because she tries to reflect his ideology. It was Kibru who knew her first since they work at the same department. One day, when Kibru and Desta were having a coffee, Desta noticed her, and compared her beauty with the sun, and then Kibru called her and introduced her with Desta. Wubit has two friends, Seble (a lawyer) and Ayda. On weekends, they have a habit of going out.

As the story goes forward, one day, when Desta and Kibru are driving, Desta gets a car accident, he hit a man and the man dies, and his car is also wrecked by a truck. They go to hospital right away, and Desta is hospitalized. His colleagues come to visit, but he is not happy that they are nagging him. Even though he wants to tell them so, he could not because he is afraid of the social implication it has. It was relatively Kibru’s visit that makes Desta happy, because Kibru is the man who does not stop telling his endless ideologies and perspectives about life. Meanwhile, the love between Kibru and Wubit has been growing even though they do not admit it publicly. When Wubit gets together with her friends, she always talks about Kibru. Even though she talks about his bad side, her friends think she is in love with him. As to Kibru, she is his every day agenda when he meets with Desta.

By the time Desta gets out of hospital, there becomes an intense love between Kibru and Wubit, but there is one thing that is holding Kibru on, his past life. He does not actually get over his ex-girlfriend, Maza. He is suffering from the nostalgia of the lost past. Meanwhile, Destais in need of a lawyer because the case that he has killed a person goes to court. He asked Wubit if she knew a lawyer and she suggested him a good friend of hers, Seble; after some time, Wubit introduced Desta to Seble. The legal case has given Desta and Seblea chance to see each other and get more attracted to each other. While this is going on in the life of Desta and Seble, Kibru and Wubit become a couple. Desta and Seble also started dating.

One day, Wubit called them all and told them to meet in a restaurant because she has an exciting surprise. They all get there immediately since they are very egger to hear what Wubit has to say. After few drinks and chats, she suddenly says ‘I am pregnant’. Kibru is shocked and angry and asks her why she does this without consulting him. When Wubit hears this, she becomes angry too, thinking she has the right to do so. Kibru is so upset. Meanwhile, Desta is arrested because of the car accident’s case. While he was in prison, his friends usually came and visited him. One day, his girlfriend Seble came to

visit. In the middle of their talk, Desta told her a secret that Kibru had been engaged to a woman called Maza after which the latter got pregnant. Because of health complication it had been impossible for Maza to have a baby. After nine months, she had died while giving birth to a child. The child had survived but Desta had given child to an adoption, to protect Kibru from grief, when he saw his child who was the cause for the death of his fiancé. Desta got sick because of bleeding happened in his head during a car accident a while ago, got hospitalized, and eventually died. The story is over by unraveling the fact that Seble is pregnant.

4.2 Unconscious Motives of the Characters

Many scholars such as Jung (1968), Wright (1986), Eagleton (1996) contend that unconscious is central to all psychoanalytic thinking. It is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges and memories that are outside of the conscious awareness. Most of the contents of the unconscious are unacceptable and unpleasant such as anxiety, conflict and feeling of pain. No one is completely free from psychological problem because we all have psychological history that begin from childhood, and our parents, and develops in the adulthood. When we see the Novel ‘Alamanor’ through this theoretical lens, we find different unconscious motives that influence the actions of the characters which will be discussed in the subsequent subsections.

Unresolved conflicts and repressed wounds. Kibru’s current life, especially his love with Wubit, is highly influenced by his past wounds that he did not deal with properly. That is, there is unresolved conflict in his mind that his ex-fiancé died while she was giving birth to a baby. He loved her and she loved him too. It was death that snatched her from him. The tragedy relives and disturbs his current life. This is depicted as: “ማግዛ የለችም፡፡ ልጅነትህን አስራብህ ሄዳለች፡፡ ልብህን መፍታትና ወቢትን ማፍቀር የአንተ ፋንታ ነው፡፡” አለ ደስታ ረጅሙን ንግግር እየቋጨ፡፡ [Maza has gone. She had tied your youth and died. It is up to you to untie your heart and love Wubit,” said Desta finishing his long speech] (2016, pp.248-249). From the extract we can understand that Kibru does not get over Maza’s death. She has already gone but he is still tied with her memories. This nostalgia of Kibru on Maza, makes his current life difficult, especially his relationship with Wubit. This is unresolved conflict. Here, the conflict is not with Maza as a person but, her death. The inevitability of death which Kibru cannot reverse has left in him a psychological wound, which is unresolved. Unless he let Maza go and accept her death, he cannot be free to continue his current love. It is cognizant of this that his friend Desta, advises him to forget Maza and adjust his state of mind to Wubit. However, the unresolved conflict which is a repressed wound created in Kibru affected his current love and life.

The wound made him afraid of any indication of pregnancy. It also affected a commitment and devotion that he is expected to give to his current lover. This is portrayed in a dialogue between Kibru and Wubit in the following extract.

“ቢቃ አረገዝኩኝምን ይፈጠር” አለች ወቢት፡፡ “I’m pregnant; that is all,” said Wubit.

“ዝም ቢይ ብየሻለሁ፡፡ ቃሉን መስማት አልፈልግም፡፡” “I said shut up, I don’t want to hear this word.”

“የራስህ ጉዳይ” አለች ወቢት፡፡ “That’s up to you,” Wubit replied to him (p. 285).

The above extract shows us how Kibru's past wound affects his current love. If he had not encountered that horrible incident with his late fiancé, Maza, he would not have been scared this much even to hear the word 'pregnant' from Wubit. Whenever he hears, the news about pregnancy what comes to his mind is death. Here, pregnancy paradoxically becomes an abject rather than an object that creates sense of happiness in Kibru.

It is this sense of abjection which is associated to the death of Maza that inflicts in him shock as it is depicted in the following turn in a dialogue between him and Wubit, “ዘም ቢይ ብየሻለሁ፡፡ ቃሉን መስማት አልፈልግም፡፡” “I said shut up, I don't want to hear this word (2006, p. 285). From this it is possible to imply that any psychological wound one experiences in the past remains in the unconscious level of our mind and gets relived triggered by current circumstances and happenings. From this it can be inferred that our past experience is not only a past but also live in the present.

Guilt. The other psychological motive that drives the action of character is guilt. In the novel, Kibru is unable to deal with Maza's death and insists in self-blame for her death, which we can see in the following extract. “የመዓዛ ደም በእጄ ነዉ” አለ ከብሩ “በእኔም ክንዩት መጥፋቷን ሳስብ፡ ከዚህ ሁሉ ቅዠት መቼ ይሆን የምባንነዉ? ብዬ እራሴን እጠይቃለሁ፡፡” [The blood of Maza is on my hands,” Kibru said, “When I think that she is gone because of me, I ask myself, when do I wake up from all this nightmares?] (p. 266).

Kibru and Maza knew that the latter's health condition did not allow her to give birth to a baby. However, they had an earnest will to get a baby. It is this strong zeal that made both to decide to have a child. Consequently, Maza got pregnant. The pity was she died when she gave birth to a baby. So, even though the decision was mutual, Kibru blames himself because he thinks he should have known better. This self-blame is the major wound that forces him not to focus on his present life, that is a life with Wubit after the death of Maza. This guilty feeling is still affecting his current love relationship with Wubit. He does not want to see Wubit get pregnant. He is rather holding back to his earlier wound, the loss of the former lover, Maza.. That is because he is afraid of history repeating itself. His past which causes him to feel guilty is scary because he believes, if he totally let himself accept the news that Wubit tells him that she is pregnant, he will be blind of the truth, and Wubit could face the same destiny that Maza faced, death.

Another extract related to guilt conscious is depicted in a rhetorical question Kibru asked, “ምን አለ ልጅ አፈልጋለሁ ባለልኳት?” ሲል አሁንም ራሱን ጠየቀ፡፡ መልስ የለዉም፡፡ [What if I did not say I wanted a child? He asked himself again. He did not have an answer for it] (p. 256). In this extract we find Kibru blaming himself for telling Maza that he wants to have a child. Here, he is thinking as if it was only his desire that forced Maza to be pregnant and that indeed led her to death.

From this it is possible to infer that Kibru's life is highly entangled with the death of Maza. He was mad and frustrated when Wubit told him she was pregnant. That is because, when it comes to child and pregnancy, all he could think of was Maza, who is dead by now. The issue of pregnancy makes the repressed wound, that is, guilt gets relived and shakes his current life for fear of the fact that pregnancy may lead Wubit to death. Psychologically, he has no guaranty that it could not happen to Wubit too. From this we can imply that a wound repressed in the unconscious in the form of guilt is so powerful and overwhelming that it can affect the present life.

4.3 Defense Mechanism

As seen in the aforementioned review part, defense mechanism is a means by which different contents of the unconscious are stored and kept under the unconscious part. In other words, if there is a wound which we do not want to bring it to our conscious, for remembering it would create anxiety to us, we prefer to keep it repressed. In this section how displacement and regression work as a defense mechanism to repress the contents of unconscious will be critically analyzed.

Displacement. Displacement is a defense mechanism of redirecting aggressive desires or behaviors on to someone or something safer than the original that cause the anxiety. When a threatening force causes us anxiety, fear or anger, we mostly find it difficult to respond or ‘take it out’ on them because we believe that they are more powerful force than us, and responding to that may actually make things worse. But when we find a safer or what we believe as a less powerful, we take our anger on them.

In the novel under discussion, Kibru’s action can be taken as displacement in that he is hiding behind books. This is depicted in the following extract. “ከብሩ በጠዋት ገብቶ መጽሐፍ ላይ ተደፍቶ አገኘው፤ ከብሩ ብዙ ጊዜ መሸሸጊያው የትምህርት መጽሐፍ ነው። ከራሱም ሆነ ከሰው ሲሸሸ የሚፈጠርበትን ቦን ያልሆነ ስሜት አዲስ ነገር በማወቅ የሚያጠፋው ይመስለዋል። [He found Kibru engrossed on his books in the morning, usually text books are hiding places for him. He thinks he can escape from the negative energy that is relived from past experience, by hiding himself getting nixed to books and attempting to get something new] (p. 298).

In the aforementioned extract, the reading action of Kibru is not just for intellectual purpose only. Rather it helps him in forgetting other thing. This is because, if he is free, it is more likely that the repressed wound such as the death of his fiancé comes to his mind. So, in order to repress guilt and unresolved conflict he makes himself busy getting engaged in reading books. Hence, redirects his feelings towards the text books. This displacement of feelings towards the text books allows him to gain a new knowledge, which in return allows him to forget the unpleasant feelings that pushed him to the books in first place, and helps him focus on the new knowledge he gets.

This sort of displacement also happens with Wubit, when she was talking with her friends, Seble, Winta and Ayda. Wubit was talking angrily while there was no good reason to be in such a state. When Seble noticed this, she said the following, “አንቺ ግን ሌላ ያናደደሽ ነገር አለ እንጂ ምን እንደዚህ ያስቆጣሻል” [What is it that has made you get furious like this unless there is something else?] (p. 65). The extract shows how Seble is surprised with her friend’s situation. She was amazed because, Wubit was so frustrated and angry with everything. Things they were talking about are not that much of an issue to be mad about it, but Wubit was upset. Later on when things got more serious and Wubit started crying, they asked her to tell them what really happened to her. Her answer proven what they already suspected of her being upset with something else. The extract below shows the real reason.

“ባያ ነገሪን ምንሆነሽ ነው?” አይዳ ነበረች። “So, goon and tell us what happened to you?” it was Ayda.

“አይ ምንም አይደል፤ይሄ ከብሩ አናዶኝ ነው።” “It is ok; I am just mad at Kibru.” (p. 70)

Kibru was not there with them, and Wubit talked with him earlier before she met her friends. He upsets her earlier, so what confuses her friends is this. But since Wubit did not take her anger out on Kibru, because he is her boss and she is afraid of him indirectly confronting him, she took her anger out on safer ones, who are in this case her close friends.

To sum up, displacement helps one repress wounds, unresolved conflict and guilt. It serves as a temporary healing mechanism. Viewed from this angle, it can also serve as means for gaining new experience and knowledge as it is a case in Kibur hiding himself behind books. Knowledge is something that he gains. This knowledge may be shared to his students. In such cases, the advantage can be beyond the individual. However, at times it can harm inter personal relationship. This can be inferred from the tense time Wubit and her friends are having as discussed above. From these, it is possible to infer that when a person exhibits certain kind of behavior, it is associated to what s/he went through in his/her past life time. So, a person lives not only his present life; but there is a past in the present influencing the present situation.

Regression as a defense mechanism. Regression is one of the notions that operate in our mental process. Contents of the unconscious such as guilty, desire, wish and wound are repressed in the unconscious of the subject for their reliving to the conscious level is threatening. To repress these contents of unconscious, defense mechanisms are used. One of the defense mechanisms is regression. This is when a person tries to relive a past experience, which can be pleasant or painful, to escape the present unpleasant situation.

Some characters in the novel *Alamanor* use regression as a defense mechanism to escape unpleasant situation that happens at present time. This is depicted in the dialogue between Kibru and Maza in the following extract.

“ጽጌሬዳ አበባ ትወጃ ነበር” አለ። ድምጹን ከፍ አድርጎ። ቀጠለና “መዓዚ አንቺን ለማስታወስ አበባ አሸታለሁ። የአበባው ሳይሆን ያንቺ ጠረን አፍንጫዬ ላይ ቀርቷል። አሁን ደግሞ ሌላ ጠረን አለምድ ይሆን ? ብዬ ግራ እጋባለሁ” አለ። በዚህ ሃሳብ ውስጥ መቆየቱን አይፈልግም። ሀዘን ልቡን ይወጋዋል። የሆነውን አሁን ሲያስበው፣ ልጅነቱን የበለጠ ይናፍቃል።

[“You used to love roses”, he said with loud voice. Then he said “Mazi, I smell flowers to remember you. What has remained on my nose is not the smell of the flowers but yours. Now, I wonder if I could get use to someone’s odder.” He did not want to think about it anymore. His heart grieves. When he thinks of what has happened at present, he wishes to go back to his childhood life] (p. 80).

As we go through the novel, we find Kibru using this defense mechanism to escape unbearable feeling of anxiety again. The extract below shows that “...ከብሩ በሃሳቡ ወደ ትላንት ሄዶ መዓዛን ሲያስብ ዛሬውን ይፀየፋል፤ ወደ ትላንት ወዲያ ወደ ልጅነት ይሸሻል፤ ልጅነትን የመሰለ መሸሸጊያ የት ይገኛል? ብሎ እራሱን የጠይቃል።” [When Kibru goes back to his past life and thinks of Maza, he disgusts his present life. He regresses back to his childhood life and asks “Can there be a refuge like a childhood life?” (P. 266)].

Here also, childhood was the best alternative for Kibru to escape his unpleasant feelings which are occurring in his adulthood. Childhood happens to be a safer and more convenient place to him, because back in his childhood he would never have to deal with kind of hard issues that he is facing at present.

This particular character does not accept the truth that his fiancé is already gone. He is constantly in denial of that his present action has nothing to do with his past. Denial

believes that bad things never happened. In other words, it is telling oneself that the problem or unpleasant event does not exist. It is refusal to accept the reality that generates anxiety by blocking it from conscious mind or by becoming involved in a wish-fulfilling fantasy. When bad things that could create anxiety happen, denial can be used as a defense mechanism, by consciously denying the fact that the problem exists, but unconsciously there is still the problem that has created the anxiety.

So far, an attempt was made to analyze the unconscious motives of characters in the novel *Alamator*. The analyses examine unsolved conflict and guilty desire. These psychological conditions the characters are in have given us a view that past experience has a determining force over the present life of characters. Moreover, for fear of the reliving of the contents of the unconscious mind, characters are depicted to repress them using defense mechanism such as displacement and regression.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study has shown that characters in the novel have unconscious motive for the actions that they are doing. These unconscious motives like guilt, repressed wounds, and unresolved conflicts were analyzed from psychoanalytical literary critical perspective. The characters were proven to be using different defense mechanisms like displacement and regression to protect their wounds that come from the unconscious. The major thing here was that the characters' past experience had a huge impact on their current life. Since characters are driven from real life, it is very important to accept the true nature of mankind and deal with our feelings as well.

5.2 Recommendations

Seeing how literary works are very related to our daily lives and how psychoanalytical literary criticism helps us analyze the characters who are considered to be reflections of real-life people, the researchers recommend writers to really portray the fact and the behaviors that they know in real life. There is no need to hide the truth from the society itself otherwise we are deceiving our future generation. The other recommendation is to the society itself, and that is to accept its true nature. The final recommendation is to other researchers. It would be better to do more studies in the area so that it can contribute to the social development of the society, and also for the development of Ethiopian Literature. What is more, our study only focused on the text as an object of analysis. However, the author can also be analyzed based on his biography, autobiography and many more sources of data to complement the textual analysis. So, another study is recommended to fill this gap.

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Authors' contributions

¹The first author designed the study and defined its research problems in consultation with the second and third author. He used a data from the text to examine characters from psychoanalytic perspectives. The study was originally in partial fulfillment of her MA degree in Literature, Jimma University.

²The second author advised the first author to design the study and define its research problems. Later, he restructured the paper into an article with additional literature review and analysis. He made ready the paper for publication and accommodated all comments from reviewers.

³The third author was a co-advisor who assisted the first author and he also worked with the second author in restructuring the paper into an article.

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