



Representation of Projective Identification in the Selected Sherlockian Short Stories by Arthur Conan Doyle

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Abstract : Arthur Conan Doyle transpires as a cardinal psychologist or a pundit of the psychosomatic theories in his short Sherlockian yarns. Though, it is an irony that he obliviously jam-packed his sagas with such byzantine notions yet categorized as a pulp fiction author. Projective Identification is recognizable in the behavioral configurations of the narcissistic characters of Doyle. This evident phenomenon encompasses the selected tales in two forms as a defense mechanism, as a therapeutic discourse both solely based on interpersonal associations. The research paper deals with this psychosomatic issue firstly as how pessimistically aggressive nuances of human behavioral patterns overshadow a human cerebrum causing projective identification in a perilous oscillatory comportment. Secondly in case of a depressive and petrified character who projects itself on Sherlock who in turn caters the situation as a therapist. He eases the discomfort replacing it with a sedate safe psychological haven by his communicational commuting and presence. The prominent thriving factor for projective identification is human associations and depicts reactions meted out against one another.

Index Terms - Projective Identification, Narcissistic Characters, Psychosomatic Issues, Defense Mechanism, Therapeutic Approach.

Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle emerged as a primeartificer who embellished his characters in the hues of realism. He had a proclivity to shape his characters prior to contouring his short sagas. Doyle had a predilection to pen his stories encasing his characters with an unchallenged hegemony by penetrating the chasmic recesses of the human consciousness. He proliferated not only the societal replica in his works but touched on different issues related to humans and their varied facets.

Prior to wording his short episodes, he interlaced his tales with components apportioned in an array of psychosomatic theories. Doyle never employed any particular theory related to the human cerebrum. A pragmatic display of numeral byzantine psychological notions is witnessed in his works. Oblivious to any kind of cerebral concepts, these ideologies resonated in his compositions in absolute magnificence.

The notion of Projective Identification by Melanie Klein lies as an undertone in the selected Sherlockian short tales. Klein propounded the rarity of the bond between an infant and his/her mother. Klein's theory inspired myriads of psychoanalysts like Wilfred Bion, Ogden, Sheldon Cashdan they teleported this concept from the nursling stage to the adult world. Freud's 'transference neurosis' is also linked to projective identification. The latter psychoanalysts propounded it in linkage to curative sessions.

This concept emerges as a resistive mechanism which comes in action as soon as the child parent bond begins. The neonate assimilates the generic behavioral stratums of his/her mother. The persona of the mother is classified as good and bad, practically the self of the child persona is observed by him/her in the mother. Klein aptly words "Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed toward the mother. This leads to a particular form of identification which establishes the prototype of an aggressive object-relation. I suggest for these processes the term "projective identification..." (Notes on Schizoid Mechanisms 102)

This mechanism disintegrates the individuality of that child and categorizes it in array of fragments replicated in the mother. The agility of thoughts of a child is solely dependent on the acuity of visible care given to him/her or received by him/her. Klein further proffers that the offcuts are diversified from the cogent finer qualities and propels it towards its mother. In the book 'Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein' it is propounded:

In projective identification parts of the self and internal objects are split off and projected into the external object, which then becomes possessed by, controlled and identified with the projected parts. Projective Identification has manifold aims: it may be directed toward the bad object to gain control of the source of danger. Various parts of the self may be projected, with various aims: bad parts of the self may be projected in order to get rid of them as well as to attack and destroy the object, good parts may be projected to avoid separation or to keep them safe from bad things inside or to improve the external object through a kind of primitive projective reparation. (Segal pp 27-28)

Projective identification is a reciprocal procedure where the child receives the projection again to maintain the status quo. Rudiments of the persona are formulated at the preliminary stage of an individual. The traits to manipulate others and ferocity

complies with the innate and his/her will to live. In a way the baby dominates the mother by maneuvering her to provide the much-needed nurturing. The next level of this theory lies in the understudy of the same scenario observed in a patient and a psychotherapist. Here containment theory is also on the play, the psychiatric analyst is the receiver end of the projective identification. He encloses this cynicism, tinkers it, remodels it and displaces it back to the patient.

This transference is a tender procedural as it is on the emotional level because any individual will only open if he/she trusts the other person. In psychotherapy sessions this credence of the patient on its caregiver is visible after trust is gained. The same issue is addressed in the short tales by Doyle. The selected short stories encompassing the core theme are *'The Speckled Band'*, *'The Adventure of the Cardboard Box'*.

A panic-stricken Helen Stoner in *'The Speckled Band'* pulls out Sherlock and Dr. Watson from their slumber. Her plea for aid at an early hour defines her urgency and danger. She is experiencing the similar strange horrifying experiences as narrated to her by her deceased sister prior to her death. She recollects those events and her sister's dying declaration of a speckled band. She tells about her stepfather Dr. Grimesby Royllo who married their then widowed mother and controlled the familial and financial affairs with an iron hand. He is an extremely aggressive personage who forced her to occupy her sister's bed chamber on pretext of some house repairs. Helen is perplexed as all the ongoing situations are parallel to the time her sister died. Sherlock carries out his investigations, leading him to the strange bedroom where she is staying. He also investigates the existence of a will from Helen's mother naming riches for her two daughters. Sherlock opines that the murder of Helen's sister was triggered due to her impending wedding which would lead to loss of finances after her departure. Helen too is a would-be bride and her inheritance would be controlled by her husband which enrages her stepfather. Dr. Royllo uses a vicious noxious trained snake to get rid of his elder stepdaughter. He is hell bent to use the same methodology to get rid of Helen but Sherlock stays in the room and strikes the snake with his cane. The serpent slithers back belligerently biting Dr. Royllo and escalating his journey towards his grave.

In the dialogue between Helen and Sherlock shows her projection of her horrors and anxiety to Sherlock. She needed someone to confide in and found Sherlock as her acquaintance had poured her trust on him. This projection identification resonates in the below lines in a to and fro movement as seen under:

"Good-morning, madam," said Holmes cheerily. "My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Ha! I am glad to see that Mrs. Hudson has had the good sense to light the fire. Pray draw up to it, and I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering."

"It is not cold which makes me shiver," said the woman in a low voice, changing her seat as requested.

"What, then?"

"It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror." She raised her veil as she spoke, and we could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn and grey, with restless frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal. Her features and figure were those of a woman of thirty, but her hair was shot with premature grey, and her expression was weary and haggard. Sherlock Holmes ran her over with one of his quick, all-comprehensive glances.

"You must not fear," said he soothingly, bending forward and patting her forearm. "We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see."

"You know me, then?"

"No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart, along heavy roads, before you reached the station."

The lady gave a violent start and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

"There is no mystery, my dear madam," said he, smiling. "The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver." (Doyle, *The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes* 208-209)

Sherlock, like a seasoned therapist calms her nerves by deflecting her attention and projecting in her his sense of understanding her consequences. This eased out her misery and tension to a certain extent it is reflected in the lines "Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. "I have been waiting so eagerly for you," she cried, shaking hands with us warmly." (225) Sherlock constantly eases her fear by making her believe that he is there for her as "...Good-bye, and be brave, for if you will do what I have told you, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away the dangers that threaten you. (232)

Her strong belief in Sherlock emerges when she says, "I assure you that I am in your hands." (230) Sherlock successfully wins her trust alike a therapist to his patient. Absorbs every bit and piece of emotional turmoil and ricocheted back to a haven where Helen could evolve from her fears and take a stand for her life and safety. In this story projective identification is treated as a psychological therapy where a solid communication is established, and reciprocation of projections is done amidst the sender and the receiver in a cyclic manner.

In *'The Adventure of the Cardboard Box'* Inspector Lestrade's conclusion is blasted by Sherlock on the severed pair of ears coated in salt. Inspector believes that young medical students planned a revenge prank on Susan Cushing due to an old grudge. Sherlock propounds and stresses the fact that the condition and preservation of these ears lack the finesse of medical personnel and simply is committed by an illiterate novice. Sherlock inquiries about the Cushing sisters Susan and Sarah cohabited prior Sarah moved out and their third sister Mary is married. Sarah is down with a brain fever whilst Mary is missing. Mary's husband Jim Browner a sailor prone to drunkenness was cheated by his wife upon his arrest by Sherlock and the authorities he accepts his crime. In a hateful rage he killed the cheating couple, later to discover it was all done by Sarah. She was the one who instigated Mary to have a better partner than Jim. This plotting was a result of the refusal to Sarah by Jim in return for her amours. Jim sends her the ears as he realized the main perpetrator of this tragic anomaly is Sarah.

In this saga the projection identification is done in a malicious manner, the initiator is Sarah Cushing who can be seen as a devaluer in nature, faces rejection from Jim. She projects her hatred for him to Mary and it is evident in the following lines "Sarah avoided me now, but she and Mary were just inseparable. I can see now how she was plotting and scheming and poisoning my wife's mind against me, but I was such a blind beetle that I could not understand it at the time." (*His Last Bow* 69) Sarah though when confronted by Jim on the man she was pushing towards Mary left the house but tampered with their marriage "Well, I don't know now whether it was pure devilry on the part of this woman, or whether she thought that she could turn me against my wife by encouraging her to misbehave. Anyway, she took a house just two streets off and let lodgings to sailors." (70) Then in turn when in rage he murdered his wife and her lover his hatred was projected on to them as:

...My God, shall I ever forget their faces when they saw who was in the boat that was closing in upon them? She screamed out. He swore like a madman and jabbed at me with an oar, for he must have seen death in my eyes. I got past it and got one in with my stick that crushed his head like an egg. I would have spared her, perhaps, for all my madness, but she threw her arms round him, crying out to him, and calling him "Alec." I struck again, and she lay stretched beside him. I was like a wild beast then that had tasted blood. If Sarah had been there, by the Lord, she should have joined them. I pulled out my knife, and--well, there! I've said enough. It gave me a kind of savage joy when I thought how Sarah would feel when she had such signs as these of what her meddling had brought about. (72)

The portrayal of these instances depict that individuals are emotion driven beings and these psychological phenomena are based on their mutual rapport. In case of projective identification the matters when seen from the therapeutic view can create wonders. It can uphold the basic nature and with much needed modifications is reciprocated back to the patient by the therapist. This is a controlled action, and it makes amends to the original persona of the patient. But in the case of a victim and a perpetrator, specially an aggressive one the tables are turned. That mastermind who wants to control others crosses every bottom line and does not care even if the other party is severely marred in this process.

This psychological occurrence is in full play in the short Sherlockian sagas in myriad forms. This depicts the deep understanding of Doyle of humans and their varied responses in array of situations. The projective identification though not worded by Doyle in actuality but is treated and portrayed in full bloom. This psychosomatic aspect seeps deep into dramatis personae mirroring the tangible theories of psychology in full grandeur. Doyle not only represents it in his works but puts up serious solutions to curb these issues. This alleviates the stature of Doyle from the chasms of a pulp fiction author and lays the foundation of his works on critically appraised platform. It evolved him and his dramatis personae as living legends revered in every eon.

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