

## **Envisaging *Personology*: Interpreting Psychic Nexus in Hilary Mantel's *Giving Up the Ghost***

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### **Abstract**

We all know that in general psychology refers to the scientific study of mind which includes various sub-genres like personality science, behavioral science, motivational science, unconsciousness, genetic science, developmental science, etc. When we take Personality school of psychology, the argument of many theorists based on several perspectives as psychoanalysis, humanistic, behavioral, cognitive, bio-psychological, genetic, etc. and their theories suggesting various patterns about the development of individual from childhood to late adolescence can be negotiated. Psychic Nexus deals with two concepts 'interiorization' and 'exteriorization' which helps in envisaging personology. The term 'personology' was already used by Murray in his theory on personality based on 'need' and 'press.' In this research paper, I attempt to explore Murray's theory and apply it on Hilary Mantel's memoir *Giving up the Ghost*. Thus by psychoanalytically blending Mantel's memoir with Murray's theory of personality, a new theory on personality is to be established. Further, the coinage of new terms such as *Themus*, *Psychic Nexus*, etc. through this research paper also helps in envisaging a new theoretical identity in the field of personology.

**KEYWORDS:** Exteriorization, Interiorization, Psychic-Nexus, Personology, Themus.

Nexus may defy human understanding because it is not the product of normal human thought... It is the product of posthuman thought.

-Ramez Naam

When analyzing human behavior, the philosophical question which often occurs undoubted is 'What propels man'? The psychological study of personality helps in knowing about this process. After Sigmund Freud's personality study many psychologists emerged with their own individual view proposing and apposing him. Henry Alexander Murray was a neo-Freudian who developed theory on personality based on 'need' and 'press' and called it personology. Henry Murray in his neo-psychoanalytical approach, designed personality as a integrated whole with its constituents of the past, present, and future experiences acted by conscious and unconscious forces with its effects on physiological and sociological factors. Murray's study on personality focused mainly on the general intuitions in human nature and worked out samples from everyday existence. He believed that "...personalities constitute the subject matter of psychology, the life history of a single man [or woman] being a unit with which the discipline of psychology has to deal" (3).

Murray deviated from the normal conception of psychological study which customized only one aspect of episode at a time. Instead he selected representative of individual's perception, emotion, intellection or behavior for analysis and interpretation. In his analysis the importance of historical narrative in psychological science, visionary dimension of personality, the mythic, and the study of the person at multiple levels of complexity is much concentrated. His proposal on the visionaries of psychological profession further inspired many of his followers as he constructed a scheme of new-concepts for portraying the entire course of individual development by providing a framework into which any single episode within a person's life may be fitted.

The term 'Personology' thus meant an organized collection of facts pertaining to the long course of complex events from human life. These facts from birth to death contain histories based on observations of the particular subject's behavior, memories and introspections. Thus Murray's theory became a 'dynamical organism' holding all accounts of speculations that referred to impelling forces, passions, appetites, or instincts, etc. His theory showed a "rationalized elaboration of the perception that a human-being is a motile discriminating, valuating, assimilating, adapting, integrating, differentiating and reproducing temporal unity within a changing environmental matrix" (36-41).

Murray gave unique interpretations by deviating himself from the orthodox psychoanalysis of Freudian loyalists. Murray observed that the course of human life is determined by the passage of time where functions of seasons, age, sex, and cultural practices creates a huge impact marking rhythms of assimilation, differentiation, and integration. With the each perishing events, the new and previously precluded combinations arise to give way to learning and maturation. The 'spiral evolution' or the 'eternal return' creates 'repetitions' or consistencies forming impression of situation and leaves enduring traces which Murray calls as 'images.' These images can be reactivated by the appearance of situations which resembles the event in the past. As life is not an irreversible sequence of non-identical events, the past always repeats to make itself alive in the present.

Murray also believed that the 'Regnant process' constitutes to the dominant configuration in the brain which helps in exercising power and authority. He calculated the external 'press' involved in this process between unconsciousness and consciousness. Murray's study on 'Regency' finally provided him clarity on his thought that this process stands in between every individual's inner and outer world as a 'connecting factor'. Hence Murray suggested. "...looking at the matter from the viewpoint of introspective awareness...it was necessary to postulate unconscious regnant processes" (47).

Murray established a detail study on 'desire' and 'drive' which are the two aspects to formally reveal the possible internal relations of drives. Here 'need' or 'desire' becomes the internal press, while 'drive' becomes a tool directing activity (a field force) in the brain region and 'emotion' becomes the excitatory process as an occurrence from the unconscious mind. Murray considered the importance of 'drive' which encapsulates conflicts, exciting a flow of images or perceived objects within the activities of the brain. Murray explained it as:

Experience seems to show that a certain desire may sometimes give rise to a dream or fantasy and at other times promote overt activity. Without the concept of an underlying drive one could not adequately represent the obvious relationship between fantasy and behavior. (p. 65)

In having a better understanding on Murray's study of personality, the list of needs and diagnostic techniques that he proposed for assessing any personality should be known. Murray used Freudian terms but with a different interpretation to it. He called the 'id' as the storage area of the primitive, amoral impulse where empathy, imitation, and identification were made. The ego consciously directs each behavior while the superego is shaped by cultural, social and peer groups. According to Murray 'Needs' or 'desires' are the cornerstones of every action as they energize and create impulse. They are many times viscerogenic- arising from the internal body (thirst, hunger, etc.) and psychogenic- arising from the mind (love, sex, esteem, etc.). Murray differentiated needs on both types as 'Proactive' and 'reactive' where the former depends on environmental objects and the later involves response to a 'specific environmental object'. 'Subsidiation' is a term which is nothing but Murray's psychological equivalent of 'substitution.' It refers to the situation in which 'one need is activated to aid the satisfaction of another need'. Further the pressure caused by the environmental objects or of childhood events to make a person's behavioral change is mentioned by Murray as 'Press.' The amalgamation of needs and press together forms 'Thema' which determines personality on the whole. The combination of personal factors and environmental factors into a pattern to give coherence to individual's behavior in an unconscious manner is 'thema.'

Murray believed that 'needs' and 'press' by the environment determines the personality. He conducted considerable research on several needs notable among them are affiliation and achievement needs. In this paper I am going to concentrate much on the need of achievement, because I am analyzing Hilary Mantel's personality as a unified whole who surpassed the obstacles of past events and achieved a state of self-actualization in her literary career. The need of 'achievement' though starts establishing itself in one's childhood, but develops continually throughout years enhancing or suppressing, strengthening or weakening the personality. Murray observed that 'Genderfactor' also have huge impact over the need of achievement. His studies on girl children and adolescents showed that many of the young women experiences conflict between their need to achieve and their need to appear feminine, caring and empathic.

Mantel's memoir *Giving up the Ghost* provides valid source for analyzing her personality. Like a case-study it provides ample details of her psychological distractions from her childhood and reasons for her psychosomatic disease. It also draws a parallel sketch drawing about her early literary career. First of all I am going to connect Murray's theory of 'need' with the needs which were left unsatisfied in Mantel's childhood. Then I am going to trace the external 'press' which were involved in her early trauma leading to her psychosomatic illness. Thereby analyzing the regnant process, I am going to bring out a clear understanding on the 'interiorization' happened within her personality. At last with analyzing her external expression in the form of writing, I am going to give a brief idea on the 'exteriorization' happened in her life.

First of all I would focus on the 'press' that created huge trauma in her. She mentions "... I am haunted by the ghosts of my own impressions, which re-emerge when I try to write, and shiver between the lines." (23) The 'impressions' which Mantel mentions is nothing but the environmental 'press' in form of past events which plays a very important role in Mantel's personality too. The first psychological press in Mantel's life happened during her early age in the form of 'Abasement' which made her passively to submit to the external force. Her mother leaving her father Henry and marrying Jack secretly, and the criticism she received from her classmates made her psychologically weak even as a child. Mantel's words "I hate going to school" (87) shows how as a dejected child she had opposed her mother marrying her step-father.

Abasement, according to Murray creates inferiority and tends one to admit defeat, wrong doing, and blame and mutilate the self even though one doesn't commit any crime. Mantel indirectly mentions her abased state: "From about the age of four I had begun to believe I had done something wrong" (22). The need at that time, every child expects from its parents or from the environment is the need of 'Succorance.' Mantel's basic need to be nursed, supported, sustained, surrounded, protected, loved, advised, guided, indulged, forgiven, or consoled as a child were left unsatisfied. She expresses her failed childhood need: "No one quarrels, no one cries-only me; no words are exchanged; the situation remains unspoken, indefinite." (95)

Mantel brought up in a catholic family and in a highly orthodox Catholic culture, created indifference in her towards non-catholic people even in her childhood days. After her mother's marriage with Jack whom Mantel believed to be a protestant, the need of 'Affiliation' or to adhere a good companionship went missing in Mantel's life. In telling about her indifference with her step-father, Mantel writes: "...we didn't get on because we were completely different." (95). As a school going child, Mantel was quiet, reserved and was never out-spoken. She mentions about her kindergarten memories in St Charles Borromeo School which gave her the external press of 'Info-avoidance.' Usually this strategy is used by human as a precautionary measure to avoid embarrassing situation, or scornful derisions from others. Mantel's refrain from active action and her passive participation with her other classmates during play further proves the insaneness in any psychologically affected child. "I can't say I learned nothing, at St Charles Borromeo. I learned bladder control; which is good for women, useful in later life. The second thing I learned was that I got almost everything terribly wrong." (64). Even though this is a regular activity seen in most of school going children, the point that Mantel had no one to express her regular emotions here becomes notable.

Mantel developed in her the need of 'Defendance' by which she was able to defend from the assaults, criticism, and blame by her classmates. Her mother's marriage with Jack not only spoiled the peace in her family but also the inner peace in her. The gossip of her mother's affair made her classmates question her 'privates'. Hence by hiding her inner agony Mantel changed her surname to Jack's to avoid her from the attacks. "...this was unfortunate for me. I had changed my surname to Jack's, and was pretending he was married to my mother, and that I was his daughter. I had to go on and on pretending it." (133). As person grew the mental ability in them also develops. The

development in superego and ego provide long-range goals for individual to strive. It is the ego-ideal which creates a strong need for aspiration and ambition in individual.

The other form of physical press which induced her early years was her somatic illness. The physical pain made her addicted to painkillers and steroids and as a result both her physical appearance and her mental attitude towards life changed. Her words: "All of us can change. All of us can change for better, at any point" (95) proves her prolonged wish over years to change her-self. Mantel's excessive use of medication further resulted in the 'removal of her uterus' which again gave a heavy blow in her personal life. These environmental press forced Mantel to develop in her the status of 'self-Autonomy,' which helped her to overcome her weaknesses and repress her fear. Mantel being over-exposed to 'self-Autonomy' glorifies it in her memoir. Her words: "I, me, and only me" (53) "I am trying to die and I am trying to live" (53) "I am changed now" (54) all shows how she holds the autonomy in her.

The need of 'Achievement' to organize ideas and manipulate thoughts in form of written expression is the highlighting issue in Mantel's case. Mantel, who reached a level of self-Actualization in her literary career with her publication of novels, represents a unique inspiring personality. Though her writing career bloomed through the obstacle path in her life, the interiorization process made her produce many literary works gained from the experience of her past life which Murray had theorized as 'press'. She herself mentions her association with the past: "The past could not be knocked out of me" (153)

Further her written memoir becomes the source of her outward expression of her inner feelings and attitudes. The process of expressing one's feelings through speech or writing is called the exteriorization. Though on thinking about the lost child, the proactive mode of need in her arise ghost like impressions, but Mantel subsidates it through her reactive need by satisfying her literary ambition. Thus both regnant process interiorization and exteriorization helps in knowing the psychic-Nexus of Mantel's personality. The amalgamation of 'thema' and psychic-Nexus give way to 'themus' a gender-oriented psychological description for the internal and external activity which creates a full fledged personality. Thus the psychological study of Mantel's memoir helps in envisaging new ideas in the field of personology.

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