

# Alienation in Peter Shaffer's the Royal Hunt of the Sun under Lacan's view point

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**Abstract:** This paper is a study on analysis of alienation in selected work of literature by Peter Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* under the view of Lacan. Through analyzing Alienation elements namely the other, identity and desire experienced by the main characters both protagonists and antagonist, this paper attempted to prove that how the feeling of being alienated is created as the people in power conquer a land and make their victims believe that they are others.

**Keywords:** Alienation, Desire, the Other

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## 1. Introduction

In study of colonizer and colonized It has been mentioned that how colonization has harmful effect not only on the colonized, but also on the colonizer. First of all, the colonized becomes as oppressed and defeated creature, whose social and human development is broken. Simultaneously, the colonizer is transformed into an oppressor, worrying only about his privileges. The colonizer realizes that his privilege is illegitimate. In the face of this discovery, the colonizer attempts to compensate his blame by finding justifications that transform his oppressive image. In order to do so, he dehumanizes and devalues the figure of the colonized. The colonized is always degraded as lazy, weak, evil and backward so that the colonizer finds justification for rejecting and dominating his subjects. Furthermore, the colonizer finds the need to annihilate the colonized in order to cease becoming his oppressor, but realizes that this is ultimately impossible, for then he would cease to enjoy his privileged status.

The *Royal Hunt of the Sun* is the story of colonized and colonizer, the story of battle between two different religions with the same principles. Another example of degrading and dehumanizing of people who have their own kind of civilization and their own belief but to the conquerors they are "others", "aliens". This play was written by Peter Shaffer in 1964 and the present article will

be analyzed from Lacanian view and the main point will be the Alienation in the play.

### 1.1. Peter Shaffer

Peter Levin Shaffer was born in Liverpool, England, on May 15, 1926, seconds after his identical twin Anthony, who like Peter was also to become a Tony award-winning playwright. After his education at London's St. Paul's school and Cambridge University, Shaffer shuttled between New York City and England, working at various jobs including music critic. During the early 1950s, Shaffer published three mystery novels, two written in collaboration with his twin. He also wrote two probing television dramas and a BBC radio play. Each concerned seminal moral issues as did his first stage hit, *Fine Finger Exercise* (1958), whose worldwide acclaim convinced him to follow a life in the theatre.

Peter Shaffer has carved out an individual path among his contemporaries. His earliest works, including *Fine Finger Exercise*, use dramatic REALISM. But mostly he uses realism to underpin highly theatricalized formats. Existentialist thought appeared in Shaffer's work without the Absurdist enigmatic plots. Drawing on a similar questioning of God's existence, Shaffer acknowledges His presence but as an unreliable figure with little inherent benevolence. Time and again in Shaffer's powerful dramas, protagonists seek validation of God. All end up disappointed and disillusioned, just as are Absurdist heroes. Verbal articulateness and dazzling theatrical structures

have remained Shaffer's great strength and earned him a knighthood in 2001. Tied into the issues of deity are fundamental contradictions between personal morality and social norms, Shaffer shapes crucial conflicts between what Friedrich Nietzsche termed the Apollonian and Dionysian in human nature.

### **1.2. *The royal Hint of the Sun***

The serious plays expand on questions regarding godhead and human conduct. Pizarro in *Royal Hunt* admits he is "god-hunting" but through Atahullpa discovers the Incan sun God is as false a deity as any European God. *Royal Hunt* "is about ruin" says Martin Ruiz at the beginning. Old Martine, a soldier of Spain now worth millions, serves as the chorus, telling the story of how Francisco Pizarro, a man in his sixties, manages to conquer an empire of twenty-four million Incans with an expeditionary army of one hundred and sixty-seven men. Ruiz regrets the day he first set eyes upon Pizarro.

The action goes back forty years, when Pizarro is recruiting soldiers in Spain for his Peruvian expedition. Young Martin, at the age of fifteen, is schooled in the codes of chivalry and is an idealistic advocate of his king and religion. He eagerly enlists his service, and he introduces the people who he was dealing with during his service. Then the God-king Atahullpa is introduced who is sovereign Inca of Peru; Villac Umu, high priest, and Chalcuchima, his general. Atahullpa believes the white god is coming to bless him. This Naïve belief will be his undoing.

The conquest of Peru was a clash between two religions that were immediately very different but similar in principal. Christianity was a religion with a rapidly expanding following. Its leaders virtually granted permission for Christians to kill in order to spread the faith. This occurred in *The Royal Hunt of the Sun* when the priests inferred that Pizarro should take the life of Atahullpa so that the Spanish would survive and the Christian belief would spread throughout South America. The priest Valverde said, "the lives of a hundred and seventy of the faithful. Are you going to sacrifice them for one savage?" (Shaffer, 1964, p. 70) On the other hand the Inca belief was a lot more settled and humane. The Inca God and ruler Atahullpa claimed "I have priest power, I confess my people of all crimes against the sun." (Shaffer, 1964, p. 34) They both believed in a supreme being, who would be killed by its enemies and rise from the dead.

### **1.3. *Lacan***

Jacques Lacan (1901-81) is arguably the most important psychoanalyst since Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the originator and founding father of psychoanalysis. Deeply controversial, Lacan's work has transformed psychoanalysis, both as a theory of the unconscious mind and as a clinical practice. Over 50 percent of the world's analysts now employ lacanian methods. At the same time,

Lacan's influence beyond the confines of the consulting room is unsurpassed among modern psychoanalytic thinkers. Lacanian thought now pervades the disciplines of literary and film studies, women's studies and social theory and is applied to such diverse fields as education, legal studies and international relations. For a student of the humanities and the social sciences today it is almost impossible not to engage with the ideas of Lacan at some level; if not first hand, then through a thinker he has influenced.

From the perspective of literary studies, the discover of Lacan in the mid-1970s, initially by feminist and Marxist literary critics, revitalized the rather moribund practice of psychoanalytic criticism and reinstated psychoanalysis at the cutting edge of critical theory.

Lacan writes, "The Other must first of all be considered a locus, the locus in which speech is constituted". (Evans, 1996, p. 132) We can speak of the Other as a subject in a secondary sense only when a subject occupies this position and thereby embodies the Other for another subject.

### **1.4. *Alienation***

Lacan sets up a couple of terms as alienation and separation in his *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1977) as two corresponding operations essential for the formation of the subject. In this work, alienation is connected to division, to the splitting of the subject, the split referring here to the choice between meaning which is produced by the signifier and being. By selecting meaning, the being of the subject fades away, a phenomenon that Lacan calls *aphanisis*; by selecting being, the subject leads to non-meaning. He hence relates the fading of being to the signifier that exists in terms of the Other, in that way, depicting alienation as a function of an external field. Lacan's conceptualization of the being of the subject in this form looks to rely on inborn biological or sensate functioning, while the meaning is relevant to the other, to an entity outside the self. The loss of the subject as the signifier presumes dominance, or, in other words, the cast a shadow on being by the signifier, is cost of meaning. Furthermore, the choice of being divests the subject of meaning or sense, which is most probably an intolerable state, as the subject inquires meaning in everything. Whatever the option may be, the outcome engages the loss of part of the other alternative. "The subject is alienated forever, through the signifier, from his/her sensate self and yet the possibility of achieving sense is also beyond his/her grasp." (Glowinski et.al, 2001, p. 10)

Lacan utilizes the term alienation abundantly all over his work: in the context of the subject's relationship to itself, to the Other and to language. In the first meaning, which is presented in the first chapter of *Écrits* (1901), the subject turns into awareness of an exterior referent of meaning, a unified specular image which supplies both a required sense of entirety and also a sense of alienation, a break with the sensate or biological being. "At this imaginary

stage, the subject looks to an illusory image of him-/herself as a unified being but loses forever, or is alienated from, his/her essential biological experience of being." (Glowinski *et al.*, 2001, p. 16)

### 1.5. Analysis

From the very opening paragraph, Old Martin, the narrator of the story who is one of the past participants in the events of the drama salutes and introduces himself, "I'm a soldier of Spain and that's it" (Shaffer, 1964, p. 13). From this early statement, the otherness of the character toward himself and his borrowing identity of his country is manifested clearly. The story is about two countries of Spain and Peru and their battles and the conquest of the former over the latter. Although, as a soldier to his country, Martin worth millions, as he confesses, "Soon I'll be dead, and they'll bury me out here in Peru" (Shaffer, 1964, p. 13). Even as a precious soldier he knows his fate is to remain an Other for ever and his dead body will be held in a foreign land. When the narrator goes off the stage and the audience gets acquainted with Young Martin, he is known as having learnt all crafts of chivalry by heart; however, no one introduces him as the son of his father, though he is still a child:

- Pizarro. Rest. (To Young Martin) Who's this?
- Diego. Martin Ruiz, sir. A good lad. He knows all his codes of chivalry by heart. He's aching to be a page, sir.
- Pizarro. Parents?
- Young Martin. Dead, sir. (Shaffer, 1964, p. 15)

Pizarro, now a man of 60s, remembers his past when he had to provide his family, and presents his lack of identity using term 'stranger'; he has always felt himself as an Other to his people and his country, and their parents did not own each other. Like Young Martin, he lacks parental identity and might not be a profitable source for Martin to follow and imitate him. However, Young Martin continues his search of identity in the character of Pizarro in the story.

Pizarro, as an alien to his people and country, not only has failed to find true identity, but also he tries to take the identity of the savages of Peru. He is going to fight them against their land, beliefs and the Inca God. So he gathers his army and moves.

What Pizarro presumes of being a soldier for country differs from what Martin believes. For Young Martin, "there's more soldiering than that... Honor, glory, traditions of the service." (Shaffer, 1964, p. 23) but Pizarro believes that "Soldiers are for killing: that's the reason" (Shaffer, 1964, p. 23); as an advice to Young Martin, Pizarro goes on:

- Pizarro. Look, boy: know something. Men cannot just stand as men in this world. It's too big for them and they grow sacred. So they build themselves shelters against the bigness, do you see? They call the shelters Court, Army, Church. They're useful against loneliness, Martin, useful –but they're not

real, they're not true, Martin. Do you see? (Shaffer, 1964, p. 23)

Even as a type of general or cavalier, Pizarro knows that a soldier can never possess an identity for himself; because in the battle, he is known as an element of his people and his country; the individual ego is nothing for a soldier, and this is disrespectful to the self, and they always have to obey and remain in the same position for ever, "Army is blasphemy. The world of soldiers is the yard of ungrowable children. They play with ribbons and makeup ceremonies just to keep out the rest of the world. They add up the number of their blue dead and their green dead and call that their history" (Shaffer, 1964, p. 23).

In scene four of the first act, the lack of identity of the Indians is demonstrated. At opening lines, while Pizarro and Filipillo ask for gold from Chieftain, he explains, "We have no gold. All was taken by the great King in his war." (Shaffer, 1964, p. 26). In introducing his King to the newcomers, Chieftain indicates that the King has taken the Gold in the war with his brother Huascar,

His father the great Inca Huayana grew two sons. One by wife, one by not-wife. At his death, he cut the Kingdom in two for them. But Atahualpa wanted all. So he made war, and killed his brother. Now he is lord of earth and sky.

- Pizarro. And he's the bastard? (All the Indians cry out.) answer. He's the bastard?
- Chief. He is Son of the Sun. he needs no wedded mother. He is God. Atahualpa\_ God!

The Spaniard invaders to Peru know themselves bastards. In general, a bastard lacks identity in that there is an uncertainty in his parent's identity and many times the birth of such a child comes across with disrespect and lack of attention a baby requires. As a result, such a person suffers from a type of otherness and alienation during his childhood and experiences several complexes in maturity. Here, Pizarro confesses to his unlawful invasion to Peru, and when facing a bastard commander like himself, he is wondered of the hell of such a King whose people are afraid of. In this regard, the audience observes the world of the Others an alienation.

The playwright here aims to indicate that even the legitimate people in this world tend to alienate themselves and take the identity through their country, religion, honors of war and glories of invasion. Even those individuals who are called as the generals, bishops, or any other type of higher position in a state does not possess that specific identity by himself; it is rather people who give them such personality, and after that, alienating their own and innate identity, they seek the identity of those whose personality is made by the same people; this might be a type of cyclic self alienation. Here Pizarro, is noticing that, while God has created man as an independent creature to possess his own identity separately, human himself forgets such mercy and the meaning of freedom and leans upon other titles to gain his alienated and forgotten self, and knees before many characters that themselves lack identity.

Pizarro, in this play, could be the symbol of a self-alienated person who possesses a high self confidence and instead of seeking another human as a leader to follow, follows his arrogance and tries to be god-like. Several expressions in the ninth scene of the first act indicate such notion:

- De Nizza. He could have killed us at any time. Why should he take such trouble with us?
- Pizarro. Because we're Gods, Father. He'll change soon enough when he finds out different.
- Pizarro. It'll have to do. We're not fighting ten thousand or three. One man: that's all. Get him, the rest collapse.
- De Soto. Even if we can, they'll kill us all to get him back.
- Pizarro. If there's a knife at his throat? It's a risk, sure. But what do worshippers do when you snatch their God?
- De Candia. Pray to you instead. (Shaffer, 1964, pp. 42-43)

Pizarro feels alienated from his true self, from what belongs to him and from what he belongs to. As a result, after having a life time of conquests and battles for Spain and finding no sign of what he has been looking for, he has come to a foreign land to perhaps relinquish his search for identity. Since as a Spanish commander and general, he cannot put a side his arrogance, he reveals this search as an inquiry for gold and God of Sun. here is the most important turning point that Pizarro explains of his journey:

- Pizarro. When I was young, I used to sit on the slope outside the village and watch the sun go down, and I used to think: if only I could find the place where it sinks to rest for the night, I'd find the source of life, like the beginning of a river. I used to wonder what it could be like. Perhaps an island, a strange spit of white sand, where the people never died. Never grew old, or felt pain, and never died. (Shaffer, 1964, p. 47)

In the coming pages of this play, Pizarro explains his alienation from his forebears and roots:

Pizarro. I did not know my mother. She was not my father's wife. She left me at the church door for anyone to find. There's talk in the village still, how I was suckled by a sow.

Atahualpa. You are not then...?

Pizarro. Legitimate? No, my lord. No more than you. (p. 71)

According to above statement, both characters are alienated from their roots and lack identity as legitimate born men; on the other hand, this statement illustrates the similarity between these characters in terms of their belonging to their identities. They are both alienated from their families and roots, and also they could be alienated from the society and the people because of their illegitimate birth; for this illegitimacy, Pizarro was even suckled by a sow that is an inferior among other animals. This point clearly demonstrates people's alienation from him and the gap between this character and society.

## 2. Conclusion

Historical, or literary narrative often employs the same pattern of plot development, which is based on an intruder's arrival and departure. The process of intrusion could be rapid or slow. But the goal is almost always the same. The intruder is determined to impose his views on the community he intrudes upon, or to extend his nation's authority by territorial acquisition, or by the establishment of economic and political hegemony over other systems. As the term suggests, this character interferes, interlopes, and trespasses. He explicitly violates or penetrates another's private sphere, be this physical, emotional, or intellectual, and he consequently becomes involved with the person or persons upon whom or upon whose property he intrudes. This involvement is voluntary on the part of intruder, although sometimes more accidental than it is premeditated, and it is always involuntary on the part of the intruded upon. Intrusion, indeed, seems to be closely associated with the use of force and violence, often with an act of aggression. It constitutes a threat either to the community as a whole, or to one or several of its values, ways of life and institutions. Intruders exploit other for their own ends. They manipulate a few people or a whole community in order to gain substantial control over their victims' lives. One of the reasons for their aggression is that they do not see themselves as equal to their fellow human beings. Their superiority is taken for granted. The intrusion motif offers nearly unlimited possibilities for formulating an initial confrontation between an intruding stranger and a given community and consequently a great number of options for developing and concluding the conflict are available. But a tragic solution in most cases is often offered to solve the hostile encounter, which has come about through the arrival of the intruder. The cycle of violence, however, continues. The abused victims are more likely to become aggressive just as their abusers, and may eventually abuse others who are weaker than themselves. Only a lucky few will overcome the physical and mental difficulties of the trauma of intrusion.

The same happens in *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*, while the Peruvian Empire was conquered by Spain. The nation that considered itself an indestructible society, collapsed as soon as its leadership removed. This play is about two thriving cultures, involving religious misunderstand and cultural mistrust.

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