In the play Fences by August Wilson the character Gabriel is subordinate but crucial to the plot of the story. Troy, the main character, throughout the play slowly breaks down and loses the things he cares about the most through doing immoral things. Troy cheats on his wife, denies his son of getting a Football scholarship and had taken the money Gabriel received for fighting in World War Two and bought a house with it. In the story it tells us that Gabriel has a metal plate in his head and his lines reflect the idea that he is not all there. Although Gabriel’s lines show that he is mentally handicapped they are also incredibly symbolic of other character’s personality traits and of events during the 1950’s. The character Gabriel is reminiscent of a Shakespearean fool who provides key information and also comedic relief.

Gabriel Maxson is plagued with a magnitude of disorders. Many of which likely stems from the injuries and trauma he endured when he fought in World War II. Maxosn had a metal plate inserted in his head and may have brain-damage from the injury of the procedure. Gabriel Maxosn is consumed in the delusion that he is the Archangel Gabriel and believes firmly that he is God’s trumpeter. Maxosn obsessively repeats himself and often speaks in broken phrases.

My conclusion is that Gabriel Maxson suffers from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Schizophrenia. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is when a person frequently has similar thoughts, actions, or behaviors. I believe that Gabriel exhibits many OCD characteristics. He repeats himself constantly and often will restate the same idea in slightly different sentences. Maxson also has outburst of singing and dancing which he is unable to control. Gabriel Maxson clearly suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder due to the horrific things he saw during war times. He is incapable of fully processing the things he saw on the battlefield and many of these raw emotions lay dormant inside him. Since Gabriel believes wholly that he is the Archangel Gabriel he is consumed in the beliefs he has and is unable to differentiate reality from his delusion. This is a very apparent case of schizophrenia.

It is unclear what specific procedure Gabriel Maxson underwent when he got that metal plate inserted in his head but most likely the procedure was done as an experiment.

After being taken by the police for disturbing the peace by singing loudly on a street corner he has landed in the care of Descanco Mental Institute.

Supporting Quotes

“Injured in World War II, he has a metal plate in his head. He carries an old trumpet tied around his waist and believes with every fiber of his being that he is the Archangel Gabriel.” (1037)

“Troy’s mad at me” (1038)

“Did you know when I was in heaven every morning me and St. Peter would sit down by the gate and eat some big fat biscuits? Oh, yeah! We had us a good time. We’d sit there and eat us them biscuts and then St. Peter would go off to sleep and tell me t wake him up when it’s time to open the gates for judgment.” (1038)

“Troy…St. Peter got your name in the book. I seen it. It say…Troy Maxon. I say…I know him! He got the same name like what I got. That’s my brother!” (1039)

“Aint got my name in the book. Don’t have to have my name. I done died and went to heaven. He got your name though. One morning St. Peter was looking at his book…making it up for judgment…and he let me see your name. Got it under M. Got Rose’s name…I ain’t seen it like I seen yours…but I know it’s in there. He got a great big book. Got everybody’s name what was ever been born. That’s what he told me. But I seen your name. Seen it with my own eyes.” (1039)

“Got me two quarters. Wanna see? I’m gonna save them and buy me a new horn so St. Peter can hear me when it’s time to open the gates.” (1039)

Gabriel sings

“Better get ready for judgement

Better get ready for judgement

My Lord is coming down. “

(pgs 1039 &1049)

”Lysons…The King of the Jungle! Rose… hey, Rose. Got a flower for you. Picked it myself. That’s the same Rose like you is!” (1050)

“I been chasing hellhounds and waiting on the time to tell St. Peter to open the gates.” “The Devil’s strong. The devil ain’t no pushover. Hellhounds snipping at everybody’s heels. Bit I got my trumpet waiting on the judgment time” “Ain’t gonna be too much of a battle when God get to waving that judgment sword But the people’s gonna have a hell of a time trying to get into heaven if them gates ain’t open” “Lyons! King of the Jungle.” “Troy’s mad at me” (1050)

“Lyons! King of the Jungle” (1054)

(he repeats the same things over and over again)

“Hey, Rose It’s time to tell St. Peter to open the gates. Troy, you ready? You ready, Troy. I’m gonna tell St. Peter to open the gates. You get ready now. “ (1078)

“There is a weight of impossible deception that falls away and leaves him bare and exposed to a frightful realization. It is a trauma that a sane and normal mind would be unable to withstand. He begins to dance. A slow, strange dance, eerie and life-giving. A dance of atavistic signature and ritual. Lysons attempts to embrace him. Gabriel pushes Lysons away. He begins to howl in what is an attempt at song, or perhaps a song turning back into itself in an attempt at speech. He finishes his dance and the gates of heaven stand open as wide as God’s closet” (1079)