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Z. FREUD'S THEORY AND ITS REFLECTION IN LITERARY WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory revolutionized the understanding of the human psyche, influencing not only psychology but also art and literature. This article explores the key components of Freud's theory, including the unconscious mind, dream analysis, and the id, ego, and superego, and examines how these ideas are reflected in literary works. Through detailed examples, it highlights how Freud's concepts shaped literary criticism and inspired authors to delve into complex psychological themes. The article also discusses Freud's impact on literary genres such as modernism and surrealism, showcasing his enduring influence on narrative structure, character development, and thematic exploration.

KEYWORDS

Sigmund Freud, Psychoanalysis, Literary criticism, Unconscious mind, Modernism, Surrealism, Dream analysis, Id, ego, superego.

INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud, widely regarded as the father of psychoanalysis, revolutionized the understanding of the human psyche with his theories that bridged the realms of psychology, philosophy, and art. His

exploration of the unconscious mind, dream analysis, and the dynamic interplay between the id, ego, and superego fundamentally altered how individuals perceive themselves and their behaviors. Freud's work



illuminated the hidden forces driving human thoughts, emotions, and actions, thereby providing profound insights into the complexity of human existence. These ideas transcended the boundaries of psychology, permeating various disciplines, including literature, which has long been a medium for exploring the intricacies of human experience.

Literature, as a mirror to the human condition, naturally absorbed and reflected Freud's psychoanalytic theories. His concepts offered a new lens for authors to construct narratives that delve into the subconscious, challenge conventional notions of morality, and dissect the intricacies of individual and collective psyche. Freud's emphasis on repressed desires, childhood experiences, and symbolic representations in dreams provided writers with a framework to craft stories that resonate with the raw truths of human life. Consequently, psychoanalysis became a cornerstone for modern literary criticism and interpretation, enriching both the creation and analysis of texts.

This article delves into Freud's psychoanalytic theory and its profound influence on literature. It explores how Freud's key concepts—such as the Oedipus complex, the symbolic nature of dreams, and the tension between primal instincts and societal norms—have shaped narrative techniques, character development, and thematic content in literary works. By examining specific examples from literary history,

the article reveals how Freud's insights inspired authors to explore the depths of the human psyche, grapple with existential questions, and address moral dilemmas in their writing. Additionally, it discusses Freud's lasting legacy in modernist and surrealist movements, which embraced his ideas to push the boundaries of traditional storytelling, emphasizing introspection, fragmentation, and psychological realism. Through this analysis, the article seeks to highlight Freud's enduring impact on the literary world and the ways his theories continue to inform and transform literary practices.

Freud's central contribution to psychology was the concept of the unconscious mind, a repository of thoughts, desires, and memories outside conscious awareness. According to Freud, much of human behavior is influenced by unconscious motives. Literature often mirrors this idea by delving into hidden motivations and suppressed desires of characters. For example, Shakespeare's Hamlet can be reinterpreted through Freudian analysis, exploring the protagonist's unconscious Oedipal complex and inner conflict.

Freud divided the psyche into three components: the id, ego, and superego. The id represents primal instincts and desires, the ego mediates reality, and the superego embodies moral and societal norms. Literary works often dramatize the tension between these forces, revealing characters' inner struggles. In Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, Raskolnikov's



internal conflict between his egotistical desire for power (id) and his moral guilt (superego) reflects Freud's structural model.

Freud viewed dreams as a "royal road to the unconscious," filled with symbols representing repressed desires and unresolved conflicts. In literature, dream sequences are frequently used to explore characters' inner worlds. Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* offers a surreal narrative akin to a dream, where the protagonist's transformation into an insect symbolizes his subconscious fears and alienation.

Freud's Influence on Literary Criticism

Freud's groundbreaking theories fundamentally reshaped the way literature is analyzed and interpreted, leading to the development of psychoanalytic literary criticism. This critical approach delves into the psychological dimensions of literary texts, focusing on the unconscious motives of characters, the underlying influences on authors, and the subjective experiences of readers. By applying Freud's insights, critics have uncovered deeper layers of meaning in literature, revealing the complex interplay between human psychology and creative expression.

One significant aspect of Freudian literary criticism is the analysis of characters. Freud's theories allow critics to interpret characters' behaviors, desires, and fears as

manifestations of unconscious conflicts and repressed emotions. For example, in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's obsessive love for Catherine and his destructive impulses can be understood through a Freudian lens as expressions of unresolved childhood trauma and repressed desires. Similarly, Hamlet's hesitation and existential dilemmas in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* have been interpreted as stemming from unconscious conflicts, particularly the Oedipal complex, which Freud famously identified as a pivotal stage in human psychological development.

Another dimension of Freud's influence lies in the study of authorial psychology. Freud's own analysis of Leonardo da Vinci's art provided a template for exploring how an author's personal experiences, traumas, and subconscious fears shape their creative works. For instance, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has often been analyzed as a reflection of her personal losses, including the death of her children and mother, as well as her anxieties surrounding creation and responsibility. Similarly, critics have examined Virginia Woolf's novels as psychological landscapes that mirror her struggles with mental illness and her profound introspection about identity and human relationships.

Freud's theories also extended to the reader's interaction with the text, emphasizing how unconscious responses shape the interpretation of literary works. Reader-response criticism, influenced by Freudian thought, explores how a reader's own



psychological experiences, desires, and repressions influence their engagement with a text. For example, a reader might project their personal fears or unresolved conflicts onto a story, resulting in an interpretation that is as much about the reader's psyche as the narrative itself. This dynamic underscores the subjective nature of literary experience and the profound connection between art and individual psychology.

Freud's emphasis on symbolism, particularly in dreams, has also provided a valuable tool for literary criticism. Critics analyze symbolic elements in texts, interpreting them as representations of unconscious desires or fears. For instance, the recurring imagery of decay and disintegration in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* can be seen as symbolic of societal and personal anxieties about death, loss, and the fragility of existence. By applying Freud's theories, critics uncover hidden layers of meaning in literary works, transforming seemingly straightforward narratives into complex explorations of the human psyche.

Freud's influence on literary criticism is not confined to individual texts but extends to entire genres and movements. His ideas about the unconscious mind and repressed desires have informed modernist and surrealist literature, with writers and critics alike embracing his methods to explore fragmented realities, inner conflicts, and the blurred boundaries between reality and imagination. In this way, Freud's

psychoanalytic theories have become an enduring framework for analyzing the psychological, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of literature, enriching the field of literary criticism and deepening our understanding of human creativity.

Freud's ideas deeply influenced modernist writers who sought to break traditional narrative forms and delve into the complexities of human consciousness. Stream-of-consciousness techniques, pioneered by authors like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, reflect Freudian concepts of free association and the flow of unconscious thought. Joyce's *Ulysses* exemplifies this, portraying characters' inner monologues that reveal hidden desires and anxieties.

The surrealist movement in art and literature embraced Freud's emphasis on the unconscious and dream symbolism. Writers like André Breton and Salvador Dalí used Freudian principles to craft surreal narratives that blurred the boundaries between reality and imagination. Breton's *Nadja* explores themes of desire and madness, drawing heavily on psychoanalytic imagery.

Kafka's works often reflect Freudian themes of repression, guilt, and alienation. In *The Trial*, the protagonist Josef K. is caught in a labyrinthine legal system that mirrors the unconscious mind's conflict between societal expectations (superego) and personal autonomy (id).



Freudian analysis of Blanche DuBois in Williams' play reveals her repressed desires, trauma, and fragile ego. Her descent into madness can be seen as a breakdown of the ego's ability to mediate between the id's desires and the superego's moral constraints.

Freud's psychoanalytic theory continues to shape literary interpretation, offering a framework for understanding the psychological depth of texts. Contemporary novels, such as Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, explore Freudian themes of memory, repression, and trauma. Freud's ideas also remain a cornerstone of interdisciplinary studies, bridging literature, psychology, and philosophy.

Sigmund Freud's theories revolutionized not only psychology but also literature, inspiring authors to explore the unconscious and confront human complexity. His influence permeates narrative structure, character development, and thematic content, offering timeless tools for literary analysis. By delving into Freud's insights, literature continues to illuminate the intricacies of the human psyche, enriching both art and understanding.

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