

The Hybridization of Theater and Psychoanalysis

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the concept of hybridity in the context of interdisciplinary approaches and genre-mixing practices in the humanities. It specifically considers the fusion of theater and psychoanalysis, which share common themes essentially drawn from the human psyche and condition. As a hybrid genre, theater emerges from literary texts, with choreographers adapting the narratives into performances. Consequently, theater is seen as an art form that incorporates elements of drama and other genres to create a polyphonic stage oeuvre.

KEYWORDS: Theater, Psychoanalysis, Genres, Hybridity, Disciplinary cross-fertilization

Literary genres are rooted in their historical context. Every time an attempt is made to interpret a literary work, the issue of genre arises. One might inquire as to whether Shakespeare's *Othello* can be classified as a tragedy, a satirical comedy, or a commedia dell'arte. As Northrop Frye observed, literary genre theory has remained essentially unchanged since Aristotle.¹ And yet, it has been subject to challenge over time and continues to function today, although to a lesser extent.

The modernists sought to transcend the limitations of genre, which they found restrictive. Since then, the number of professional poets, playwrights, and novelists has declined. Postmodernists show a lack of interest in genre, focusing instead on the intrinsic value of the work itself. Since the phenomenological and aesthetic reception, the synergy between author and performer has resulted in each performance being a new creation.

The concept of genre raises many theoretical questions that require further investigation. To delineate its scope, the term "genre" is not limited to aesthetic or literary considerations. Lexically, as indicated by the Latin word from which it derives, "genus" refers to the origin. A genus is a category that is subordinate to a species. In the natural sciences, a genus is a biological classification category that includes species grouped together on the basis of phylogenetic similarity.

The plural form of "genus," "genera," indicates a taxonomic hierarchy. In this context, the purpose of "genus" is to classify species. This classification is analogous to that used in the natural sciences, where the term "species" denotes that the literary realm is comparable to the realms of flora and fauna. In Latin American countries, the term "géneros literarios" refers to the main literary genres.

In their seminal work, *Theory of Literature*, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren posit the following assumption:

The literary kind is an "institution"—as Church, University, or State is an institution. It exists, not as an animal exists or even as a building, chapel, library, or capitol, but as an institution exists. One can work through, express himself through, existing institutions, create new ones, or get on, so far as possible, without sharing in politics or rituals; one can also join, but then reshape, institutions². This suggests that literary genres are tangible entities. The two critics do not offer any insight into the processes by which genres are created, convened, or function. The study of genres facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of literary works. As Jean-Marie Schaeffer notes:

Genre theory has thus become the place where the fate of the extensional field and the definition of literature are played out: the unattainable semiotic specificity is "saved" thanks to the succession of genre theory³.

In his analysis, Yves Stalloni identifies two distinct approaches to genre:

Two fields of knowledge have used these definitions to designate specific classifications: grammar, where the word "gender" is used to distinguish the categories of masculine and feminine (and possibly neuter); and literature and art, which have used the term to describe classes, subjects, or modes of creation. In painting, for example, we distinguish portrait from landscape, seascape from

¹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: NJ Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 13.

² Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. 235.

³ J.-M. Schaeffer, *Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire ?* (Paris : Seuil, collection « Poétique », 1989), p. 10. My translation.

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still life; in architecture, we distinguish Gothic from Romanesque, Baroque from Classical; and in cinema, although a recent art form, it is traditional to distinguish between the categories of Western, musical, adventure, peplum, or cartoon⁴.

In modern and postmodern theater, the boundaries between genres are being redefined by the dynamic interplay between playwrights and directors, characters and actors, and readers and audiences. The performing arts encompass a variety of genres, including myth, legend, epic, miracle, lyric drama, narrative poetry, and others that often overlap.

This study aims to conduct a comprehensive examination of psychoanalytic criticism and dramatic literature to demonstrate the necessity of these theories for literary and artistic studies. Furthermore, we will illustrate how the aforementioned fields inform the analysis of both classic and modern literature. Drama and psychoanalysis represent two foundational conceptual frameworks for scholarly research. Despite their distinct natures, they are complementary in their approaches to understanding human experience. Both disciplines are concerned with the complexities of subjectivity, identity, and desire as key thematic concerns. Although approached in different ways, they provide a rationale for investigating questions of subject formation, identification, and the performance of specific gender roles. Given the natural affinity between body criticism and psychoanalysis, psycho-criticism must provide a supportive framework for a deeper approach to literature.

The modern American theater from 1940 to 1960, especially the plays written and produced during the McCarthy era, is interesting for its suggestive power. The subject of carnal desire, a taboo topic for the stage, is only alluded to obliquely. Nevertheless, the potential for subversive action remains. Playwrights such as Tennessee Williams give voice to those who are silenced in a binary, heterosexist, patriarchal society. Their works encourage reflection on the complex nature of gender and the blurring of boundaries between masculinity and femininity, homosexuality and heterosexuality. In contrast to the reassertion of sex/gender differences, modern playwrights advocate a hybrid view of identity in which subjects are understood as the sum of the heterogeneous selves they embody. Their dramatic works offer a wide range of identifications and introduce the queer idea that identity is a socially and culturally constructed site of multiplicity and constant becoming. This concept posits that masculinity and femininity exist on a *continuum*.

In light of the ideological and political context that prohibited the assertion of marginal sexualities, Tennessee Williams situates desire in an intimate sphere where everything is to be decoded, thus favoring a greater complicity with the spectator. A pervasive theme in his theatrical works is the latent erotic expression, which places greater emphasis on the resonances of sexuality than on its actual realization. If desire is alluded to on the stage, rather than being made manifest, the potential for subversion remains untapped. The themes of desire and gender, or sexual identities, permit an evaluation of the author's willingness to challenge societal norms.

For Williams, as for Plato, desire can be understood as a fundamental emptiness. It appears to be both a sign of incompleteness and an aspiration for wholeness. The Latin word *desiderium* is defined as a longing for something that is missing. The nostalgic spirit that pervades Williams' creative writing is inextricably linked to a sense of absence. The mythological and metaphysical dimensions of desire, perceived as an ontological lack, are highly relevant to the theme of androgyny. This framework provides a foundation for our reflections on queer themes. Nevertheless, the definition of desire proposed by Plato is incomplete without considering some key concepts of psychoanalysis.

René Girard's reflections on mimetic desire and Sigmund Freud's concept of life and death instincts are intricately intertwined in Williams's works, particularly in *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *Orpheus Descending*. These early plays are of particular interest because of the dramatic tensions they highlight. Such tensions engage the author, who was marked by a heavy Puritan heritage. This explains his oscillation between the desire to transgress and the need to conform, and the tragic plight of his characters.

Desire generates an ambiguity that is built around the principle of duality, or the dialectic of the concealed and the revealed. Williams's indirect approach to sexuality has led to the emergence of interstitial writing, a form of "in-between" theater that challenges the boundaries between homosexuality and heterosexuality, male and female. The elliptical approach to desire has been the subject of criticism from numerous critics, who have accused Williams of lacking audacity. Nevertheless, his theater is notable for its emphasis on the fragment, which employs discourse ruptures as a strategy to foster interactivity. The playwright invites the spectators to participate in the construction of meaning by filling in the gaps in the intentionally incomplete texts. Williams' ambivalent discourse on homosexuality, while dispelling suspicions about his sexual orientation, also blurs the lines of gender dichotomy.

The historical evolution that led from Gay and Lesbian Studies to Queer Theory presents Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "The Epistemology of the Closet" and Judith Butler's theories on gender identity and gender performativity as significant contributions to the field. Queer Theory is of interest to us in a deconstructive way. It challenges the notion of essentialism, making sexual ambiguity a valuable tool for approaching the author's work from a hybrid perspective. Moreover, it reveals hitherto unspoken aspects of the canonical text, thus contributing to the visibility of latent homoerotic expressions conveyed in the plays. The term "queer" is defined in opposition to the social and cultural norm. This approach sheds light on the theme of marginality, which is

⁴ Yves Stalloni, *Les genres littéraires* (Paris : Armand Colin, 2008), p. 10. My translation.

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inextricably intertwined with that of desire. Thus, it would be beneficial to illustrate how the queer critical apparatus has evolved into a distinct field within Anglo-Saxon countries. Despite resistance, the field has made significant progress in the United States and Great Britain. This theory could not have emerged without the contributions of prominent French thinkers, including Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Monique Wittig. Their controversial ideas have been a source of much debate since the 1970s.

Having established the theoretical framework for our study, we will now examine the implicit modes of representation of desire. Playwrights employed a set of techniques to elucidate or, conversely, to obscure their message. These specific effects are expressed visually through the use of archetypes, as well as enunciatively through the use of elisions. In staging the "closet" as an interstitial space for transgression, the playwrights of the pre-Stonewall era, prior to the 1969 riots that paved the way for sexual liberation, introduced us to their pathetic characters who struggle with their urges in a society that hypocritically conceals passion under the thin veneer of civilization. The alternation between shadow and light serves to illustrate the existence of these tormented creatures that pursue protective darkness while being fascinated by light as a bearer of truth. The dialectical tension between shadow and light is employed by these authors to arouse our curiosity about the visible and the invisible and to invite us to probe the murky depths of our beings. By illustrating the extent to which the characters are enmeshed in their deceptions, Tennessee Williams invites the reader to examine the enigmatic nature of their psyches and to delve into the sensitive realm of their unspoken minds.

In the context of the inflexibility of social norms, the characters become adept at the art of deception. By employing a variety of pretenses, Williams portrays the contradictory voices that inhabit the individual, thereby expressing the disorderly identity of his characters who seek to escape the criteria of social categorization. By presenting his characters in disguise, Williams seeks to denounce the dangers of cultural homogeneity and to demystify the repressive norms that result in social ostracism. In his drama, Williams employs the metaphor of the mask as a device that corroborates the idea of the unspeakable and simultaneously highlights the notion of a fluctuating identity and the artificiality of gender. The concept of a fragmented identity is illuminated by the Male Gaze Theory, first articulated by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 seminal essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." Moreover, Michel Foucault's conceptualization of power relations is useful in examining Williams's dismantling of the patriarchal system. The playwright employs the malleability of gender roles to transform transgression into a subversive instrument.

This study explores the coercive control exerted through regulatory norms of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, the specific techniques employed by the author to challenge social power relations will be discussed. This symbolic violence is pervasive in the dramatic texts, which employ a narrative strategy of "des/inclusion" that destabilizes the ontological coherence of the categories of desire and identity, thereby challenging the essentialist view of the subject. Williams' plays are permeated with the quest for selfhood through the embodiment of otherness. His dislocated characters are driven by a desperate pursuit of their original unity. They become engaged in self-alienating mirror games. The most poignant expression of their existential predicament is the incongruence between the image they have of themselves, the denied shadow they unconsciously cast onto others, the wished-for ego ideal, and the social gaze which reflects back to them their own deficient self.

In his plays, Williams employs a variety of techniques to introduce the theme of the double, which is related to the archetypal image of the *doppelgänger*.⁵ The shadow archetype enables the playwright to create a multiplication effect, thus allowing for a nuanced interplay of projections and identifications involving characters and spectators. The process of fragmentation serves to reveal the inner divisions within characters and the dynamics of their relationships, thereby placing identity under the seal of plurality. Williams challenges the binary logic by redefining subjectivity and by reversing gender stereotypes. By staging gender-bound games of seduction and the power relations they induce, he subverts the conventional gaze order that defines men and women. The consecration of virile males as erotic objects can be interpreted as an empowerment strategy that helps the female body to restore its denied dignity. In doing so, the author challenges a deeply entrenched taboo in his conservative society. The act of performing cross-gendered seductive roles serves to illustrate the extent to which gender identities are constructed.

Williams invites us to engage in a dialectical approach to the concepts of femininity and masculinity, as well as homosexuality and heterosexuality. This approach differs from the traditional contrastive method of analysis. The androgynous symbol is presented as one of the strategies employed by the author to perpetuate the ambiguity of genre. Williams's work blurs the boundaries of gender distinction to circumvent the direct portrayal of sexuality. The author employs gender-neutral or gender-inclusive androgynous metaphors, such as asexuality, virginity, incest, motherhood, cross-dressing, and cannibalism, to transcend the confines of sexual identity and produce effects of indeterminacy. Thus, he elucidates the multifaceted dimensions of gender identity, encompassing not only the dichotomy of male and female, but also the nuances of homosexual and heterosexual orientations, and beyond. Williams' characters are restless and their ideal of the perfect synthesis of polarities remains unattainable. In the playwright's vision, the androgynous is presented less as a fixed state than as a process of becoming. The Platonic myth of the split body seeking its other half is not a viable concept in Williams' theater. This corroborates our hypothesis with regard to the queer dimension of his works, in which the stationary is replaced by fluidity.

⁵ The term "Doppelgänger" was first introduced by Jean Paul in his 1796 novel *Siebenkäs*, and has since been extensively developed both as a theoretical concept and a narrative device.

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It is of the utmost importance to examine the culturally committed dimension of Williams' theater and its humanist value. The author's work is replete with expressions of empathy for the vulnerable. His characters are situated between the poles of normality and eccentricity, driven by a desire to transcend the regulatory frameworks into which they have been socialized. They perceive themselves as having a mission to challenge the status quo and to initiate significant upheaval at various levels, including sexual, social, moral, and religious. By advocating on behalf of the marginalized within a homogenous society, Williams engages in both social and political action. The themes of sexuality and identity are inextricably linked to a gender policy that posits a dialectic between norms, knowledge, and power. In this vein, the objective is to elucidate the ideological underpinnings of Williams' dramatic oeuvre. The author conceptualizes desire as a vector of cultural transformation, positing it as a fundamental element of the queer transgression he represents. Williams' art is not overtly an art of provocation. However, in its resistance to the established order, it becomes the bearer of a protest message with the potential to bring about profound social and political change. Williams' ideological vision is constructed in opposition to the mainstream. The quest for openness and the need to rebuild society on an inclusive basis requires the deconstruction of patriarchal domination and gender paradigms.

To bridge psychoanalysis and theater, I needed to identify a critical and interpretive framework. To this end, I have chosen a psychoanalytical approach as a means of exploring the depths of both dramatic texts and theatrical performances. The origins of psychoanalysis and drama can be traced back to the human psyche. Consequently, they are inextricably linked. Literature's portrayal of characters moving through time and space captures and challenges the essence of the human condition. This interaction between human subjectivity and creativity provides a rich foundation for psychoanalytic theories. Similarly, there is a mutual connection between life and theater. As Shakespeare noted in *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players. / They have their exits and their entrances, / And one man in his time plays many parts, / His acts being seven ages."

The field of psychoanalytic literary criticism emerged in the 1960s and is concerned with the application of psychoanalytic knowledge to literature. The fundamental tenet of psychoanalytic literary criticism is based on the profound impact of unconscious processes on human desires, thoughts, and actions. Sigmund Freud developed a theory that provides insight into the subterranean mental forces, thereby enabling individuals to raise their awareness by delving into the meanders of their psyches. David Lodge emphasizes the pivotal role of literature in comprehending human behaviors. He states, "Literature is a record of human consciousness, the richest and most comprehensive we have."⁶ Noam Chomsky offers a similar perspective: "It is quite possible . . . that we will always learn more about human life and personality from novels than from scientific psychology."⁷

The field of literary studies has benefited from the contributions of numerous prominent figures in psychoanalytic critical theory, including Alfred Adler, Melanie Klein, D. W. Winnicott, Karen Horney, Carl Jung, Françoise Dolto, and Jacques Lacan. The psychoanalytic approach to literature is believed to have been, if not founded, at least inaugurated by Freud, who wrote both literary criticism and psychoanalytic theory. Freud was fascinated by Shakespeare, whom he regarded as "the greatest of the poets"⁸ and most heavily relied upon in his clinical findings. He conducted a comprehensive analysis of Shakespeare's tragedies, with a particular focus on *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. He genuinely concluded that he had merely codified or sketched a map of the human mind, consistent with the achievements of Shakespeare and other humanists. He declared that he had not invented hot water, "The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious; what I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied."⁹

Freud posited that Shakespeare was the primary catalyst for the investigation of the unconscious mind. Similarly, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan hypothesized that literary studies serve as a foundation for psychoanalysis.¹⁰ This reversal of the traditional order of influence lends further support to the view that it was not the analyst who paved the way for the artist. Conversely, it was the artist who initiated the advent of the psychoanalyst. In his writings, Freud addressed both the literary aspect of dramatic art and its theatrical presentation. He was convinced that psychoanalysis had a significant role to play in the analysis of literature and performance, and he focused his attention on artists who made extensive use of motifs, archetypes, metaphors, and symbols. Consequently, he proceeded to theorize creativity in his *Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1922), postulating that the impulse in literature and art is the sublimation of pleasure drives:

The artist has . . . an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctive needs that are too clamorous; he longs to attain to honour, power, riches, fame, and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving

⁶ David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel: Connected Essays*, Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 10.

⁷ Noam Chomsky, *The Essential Chomsky*, edited by Anthony Arnove, New York: The New Press, 2008, p. 249.

⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV, London: Hogarth Press, 1957, p. 313.

⁹ As Jeffrey Berman notes, this assertion was made by Philip R. Lehrman in his 1940 article "Freud's Contributions to Science" published in the journal *Harofe Haivri*, Vol. 1. It was subsequently referenced by Lionel Trilling in his 1940 work "Freud and Literature," In: *The Liberal Imagination*. For further information, please refer to Jeffrey Berman, *The Talking Cure: Literary Representations of Psychoanalysis* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), p. 304, n. 40.

¹⁰ Lacan, "Hommage fait à Marguerite Duras (1965)," In: *Autres écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 193.

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these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his libido too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis.¹¹

Freud's conceptualization of literature and art as “displacements” of repressed desires, and thus as outlets, is probably what led modern psychoanalytic criticism to prioritize the study of the writer's psyche. Literary works have been interpreted as fantasies that function as coping mechanisms, allowing authors to address their socially repressed desires in their works. Authors can protect themselves from anxiety through this process of sublimation. According to Freud:

Art brings about a reconciliation of the two principles in a peculiar way. The artist is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction. As it is first made, and who then in phantasy-life allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes. But then he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts, he molds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. Thus by certain path, he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favorite he desired to be, without the circuitous of creating real alternations in the outer world.¹²

Within this framework, “the literary man is a specialist in association (wit), dissociation (judgment), re-combination (making a new whole out of elements separately experienced). He uses words as his medium.”¹³

Psychoanalysis provides insight into the human experience. Without careful study of the psyche, the unconscious remains a dark wilderness. Psychoanalytic criticism makes literature conceptually intelligible, and literature in turn contributes to the theories that allow us to understand it. It has an experiential value, and in this light it contributes to a phenomenological understanding of experience that cannot be derived from theory alone. Consequently, the humanist and the clinician work together through different concepts and methodologies to provide a more complete understanding of human knowledge. Since its inception in the nineteenth century, psychoanalytic reading has been a well-established practice. The field has now evolved into a sophisticated interpretive tradition that allows for a more nuanced reading of literature. The application of Freudian concepts to literary analysis allows for the examination of the author's or character's imagination, the study of psychological principles at play in literary works, the reception of literature, and the unconscious organization of the creative act. As Wellek and Warren have remarked:

By ‘psychology of literature’, we may mean the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature or, finally, the effects of literature upon its readers (audience psychology).¹⁴

For Freud, the mind is like an iceberg; most of what we think takes place at an unconscious level. The more the unconscious is left unchecked by reason, the more literary characters fall prey to irreconcilable dualisms. Their inner contradictory impulses create tensions in their minds and symptoms in their bodies, making them all the more poignant. Since the focus of our research is the connection between psychoanalysis and theater, I have tried to identify the underlying meanings of dramatic works. As I have become familiar with psychoanalytic theory, I have found that its basic tenets are largely applicable to the theater. These include the split self, the oedipal crisis, the mirror stage, and defense mechanisms. Some dramas, such as well-crafted plays, naturally lend themselves to psychoanalytic interpretation and can be deciphered in the light of Freudian, Jungian, or Lacanian theories. Other dramatic genres may be evoked here, such as Antonin Artaud's theater of cruelty, Fernando Arrabal's theater of panic, and Augusto Boal's theater of repression.

Psychoanalytic criticism argues that artistic works, such as dreams and symptoms, express the implicit blind spots of their authors. This makes art a manifestation of the artist's neuroses. But while fictional characters may well be the projections of their creators' wounds, our intention is not to put the author on the analyst's couch by simply gathering biographical material and throwing it at them. Rather, we are concerned with the language of the text itself, deciphering what is unsaid. That is, we try to unravel the hidden meaning of the works through an analysis that is internal to the text, which has its own textual psyche.

The psychoanalytic approach, which seeks to comprehend the author's psyche, is a hallmark of Charles Mauron's methodology. It employs the intertextuality of the literary work and identifies what Mauron termed “obsessive metaphors.” Although discursive in nature, it differs from the Lacanian method, which focuses not on the creator, but on the product. Lacan's analytical objective is to elucidate the enigmas of imaginative texts in which language assumes a pivotal role. This is in contrast to the Lacanian method, which aims to delineate psychological profiles or reconstruct the author's intentions. The writer's unresolved fixations will be revealed in the interactions of the characters. Nevertheless, an interpretation based solely on the author's intentions would be an inaccurate representation of the texts. Lacan's literary criticism thus differs from Freud's in that it is more interested in the layers of meaning encoded in the depths of texts. The objective is to untangle the intricate interrelationships between the unconscious and the text, rather than focusing on the individual characters and their creators. Lacan's approach foregrounds metaphor and metonymy as

¹¹ Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1922), p. 314.

¹² Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 3rd edition, New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1963, p. 82.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 89.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 81.

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key rhetorical tropes, prompting interpretive strategies based on the poetics of the text rather than the life of the author. This approach allows for the elucidation of the dramatist's discursive matrix and the relationship between the reader and the text.

In light of the aforementioned considerations, our primary objective is to examine the relationship between the dramatic text and the reader's response, as well as the networks of associations within the text itself. This latter aspect can be conceived of as representing the human psyche. The intertwining of theater with psychology allows us to consider how playwrights conceptualize creative writing in psychoanalytic terms and the way in which psychology informs literary discourse.

An examination of literature from an interdisciplinary perspective, specifically in relation to psychology, facilitates the understanding of the underlying structures of texts. Drama is a product of the mind; although it is based on reality, it is not literally true. It can therefore be considered an illusion whose effects are nevertheless authentic. Theater, by presenting the multifaceted aspects of human experience in a fictional context, achieves a quality that is both temporal and universal. It is of the utmost importance to undertake discourse analysis of dramatic works. Nevertheless, the process of analyzing the textual language should not result in the neglect of the ultimate point of a play text, namely the production. The study of drama necessitates an investigation of the "language of the theater," which encompasses all the elements of theatrical production, including the set, costumes, lighting, music, and so on. Consequently, an investigation of the conventions inherent in the play script and those used in its performance is the most effective method for achieving a more nuanced understanding of the text's subtleties.

We will now examine the three main schools of psychoanalysis, as identified by Freud and subsequent theorists. In their pursuit of the literary unconscious, psychoanalytic critics concentrated their efforts on the three areas of investigation previously outlined: the author, the reader, and the text. As a seminal thinker, Freud was primarily concerned with the articulation of sexuality in language. Freud regarded dramatic art as a privileged means of circumventing the superego, thereby overcoming the guilt feelings of authors and satiating their imaginative demands. Freud postulated that the writer's "innermost secret" was to elicit the same pleasure from the reader. He saw the creative act as a variation on the process of fantasy and suggested that Goethe, in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), was attempting to protect himself from suicidal ideation. He claimed that the mechanism of poetry was analogous to that of hysterical delusions. For Freud, literary texts, like dreams, serve as a means of expressing their creators' symptoms.

The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts, but are on the contrary represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech.¹⁵

Freudian classic psychoanalytic criticism sought to establish a connection between writers and their creations by analyzing the unconscious motives or those of their characters, the themes, language, and sexual imagery they employ. Freud frequently interpreted literary works as representations of reality, prompting readers to view characters not only as mental constructs but also as true clinical cases. This perspective facilitates our comprehension of the behavior of characters depicted in a realistic manner, offering insights into their motivations and actions that are analogous to those observed in real people. There are various types of characterization, however, that require different strategies of interpretation. Moreover, literary interpretation is more malleable than clinical reality. One of Freud's most significant contributions was his analysis of classic psychoanalytic patterns, such as castration anxiety, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900):

In solving the riddle of the Sphinx, Sigmund Freud unknowingly laid the foundations for a new school of literary criticism, for it was he who solved, as well, the riddle of Hamlet, and the riddle of Rebecca Gamvik of *Rosmersholm*.¹⁶

The meeting of drama and psychoanalysis can be traced back to Freud's commentary on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, first staged in 429 B.C. Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex helped to illustrate the normative phase of psychosexual development. In his 1979 book, *The Tragic Effect*, the psychoanalyst André Green underscores the relevance of psychoanalysis to literary criticism. He posits that Freudian theory is indebted to drama, given the parallels between theater and dreams. Freud theorized that art represents the fulfillment of demands that reality denies. For Green, the unacknowledged preoccupations of artists find their most visible expression in their works. This involves the complicity of the reader and the spectator, who respond to those sublimated desires in a shrewd manner.

Freud assumed that the human psyche could be divided into three distinct components, which interact with each other. The id, as the unconscious aspect of the psyche, contains the passions and is the only part of the personality present at birth. The ego, which is largely conscious, serves as a mediator between the id and the external world, representing reason. The superego, the judicial branch of the personality, functions according to the moral principle, which is defined as societal and cultural restraints. A number of scholars, novelists, and poets drew upon Freud's paradigms in their creative and critical works. Conrad Liken conducted a Freudian analysis of American literature, while W. H. Auden applied Freudian insights to poetry and criticism. Among the

¹⁵ Freud, "On Dreams," Excerpts, In: *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, Cambridge: Blackwell Pub., Inc., 1993, p. 26.

¹⁶ Morton Kaplan and Robert Kloss, *The Unspoken Motive: A Guide to Psychoanalytic Criticism* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), p. 155.

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celebrated novelists influenced by Freud's theories are William Faulkner, Henry James, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust, and Toni Morrison. Some poets were even Freud's analysands, as evidenced by the case of Hilda Doolittle, who recorded Freud's clinical methods in her 1956 memoir, *Tribute to Freud*.

Freud's conceptualization of the human psyche, which posits two opposing principles—the pleasure principle and the reality principle—is pertinent to our understanding of drama. Such psychoanalytic patterns present in literature offer a means of unraveling the latent meaning that is disguised beneath the manifest content of texts. As Terry Eagleton observed, “all literary texts contain certain sub-texts and to some extent they may be spoken as the unconscious of the work itself.”¹⁷ In essence, the unspoken meaning of a text is as significant as the explicit content. This leads us to conclude that the underlying concept of homo-textuality expressed in texts is of greater importance than the explicit homosexual content.

The Jungian school of criticism draws upon Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, a universal psyche shared by all cultures. According to Jung, the human psyche is composed of three components: the ego (conscious mind), the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. In Jungian literary criticism, the analysis of archetypal images is employed in the interpretation of plays, poems, and novels. Such images may be deduced to relate psychologically to the author or to the characters. Freud criticized Jung's spiritualist approach, maintaining that the nascent field of psychoanalysis should be scientific in nature.

Jung distinguished himself from Freud's emphasis on sexuality and his equation of art with neurosis, claiming that literature is an expression of the primary themes of the collective unconscious. Jung's contra-Freudian archetypal criticism contests the psychological experience of the reader's response to the text, asserting that literary works are not concerned with the personal psychology of the writer or the reader, but rather with the dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective unconscious. Archetypal criticism posits that a text's meaning is shaped by psychological and cultural myths. Archetypes are the recurring patterns, images, metaphors, and symbols that are already laden with meaning when used in a literary text. In his work, Jung identified four major archetypes: the *persona* (the mask), the shadow (the dark side of the psyche), the *anima* and *animus* (the masculine and feminine energies), and the self (the conscious aspect of the psyche).

From the 1970s onward, the theories of Lacan have inspired a new school of psychoanalytic critics, who illustrate the laws of desire through a focus upon the language of literary texts. Lacan has achieved a prominent place in the literary critical canon by revisiting Freud's theory of the unconscious and applying Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics, structural anthropology, and post-structural theories.

Lacan's major contribution to literary studies is his attempt to formalize psychoanalysis by emphasizing the symbolic order of language. He drew on concepts from linguistics that Freud was unable to access, going so far as to claim that the unconscious is “structured like a language.”¹⁸ In making this assertion, Lacan gave semiotics a central role, dismantled the dichotomy between the rational and the irrational, and elevated Freud from the biological to the linguistic realm. Lacan argues that the unconscious is not a place within the subject, but rather an intersubjective space between people. This otherness resides outside the subject. Because literature is a discipline in which language plays a pivotal role in understanding the human condition, Lacan's theories are relevant to the analysis of literary texts. His integration of psychoanalysis and linguistics represents a crucial shift at the turn of the twentieth century. The application of Lacanian thought to literary analysis allows for an investigation of the nature of truth.

In his 1958 text on Gide, Lacan proposed that the psychoanalyst's interpretation of literature is contingent upon the “signifiante” of the message, rather than its “significance.” This challenges the dichotomy between poetry and truth as delineated by Goethe. In other words, for Lacan, truth and poetry are ultimately unknowable. For Lacan, poetry serves as a conduit for accessing the real, or the unspoken aspects of desire and mortality. Lacan's theoretical concepts facilitate the investigation of desire, challenge the notion of fixity in the construction of identity and otherness, and examine the speaking subject's relationship with language. Lacan posits that language and discourse are inherently permeated by the unconscious. By interpreting literature through the lens of Lacanian tenets, which challenge the stability of psychic and sexual life, readers can gain a new perspective on dramatic productions. To engage with Lacan's critique, it is necessary to become familiar with his insights into the structure of the psyche.

Lacan postulated that the self is constituted by three systems or orders: the real, symbolic, and imaginary. The imaginary refers to a pre-linguistic and pre-oedipal stage preceding language acquisition. During this phase, the child develops a sense of individuation from his mother, other people, and objects. The symbolic stage is marked by the child's entrance into language and his ability to generate symbols. The act of accessing language initiates the subject's engagement with the signifier, thereby introducing the concept of desire. During the imaginary stage, the child is primarily focused on the mother. On the symbolic level, however, the child shifts his attention to the father, who represents the laws of language and power. The real resists discursive capture and is defined as that which always returns to the same place.¹⁹ As Jacques Lacan notes in his definition of psychosis, “What

¹⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 155.

¹⁸ Joël Dor, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language*, trans. Susan Fairfield, New York: Other Press, 1998, p. 244.

¹⁹ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 49.

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does not come to light in the symbolic appears in the real, the realm outside the subject, for instance as a hallucination.”²⁰ Elsewhere, Lacan states, “Le langage mange le réel,”²¹ literally language devours the real. Moreover, “the real is when one bangs into it”: The first lineaments of science show the real for the human eye as what returned always to the same place in the heavens: the stars said to be fixed (quite wrongly, since they turn and, if they turn, it is because it is we who turn). This was not obvious at first. There is no other possible definition of the real than: it is the impossible; when something finds itself characterized as impossible, it is only there that is the real; when one bangs into it, the real, it is the impossible to penetrate.²²

Lacan’s incisive concepts have been an illuminating discovery, mainly his insights on the mirror stage, the Name-of-the-Father, the phallus, the foreclosure of the subject, metaphor and metonymy. Also inspiring is his understanding of psychoanalysis as a theory of how the human subject is created through social interaction, and of desire as a social phenomenon generated through fantasies that are caught up in linguistic, cultural and ideological strictures.

Lacan’s theory of the split between the eye and the gaze provides a sensitive tool to analyze desire in the theater. The eye which glances is that of the subject, Lacan argues, while the gaze is located on the side of the object and thus belongs to the sphere of otherness. Moreover, Lacan reinvented the unconscious, describing it as a discourse: “the unconscious is the discourse of the Other.”²³ This claim takes the subject along “the signifying chain,” wherein meaning varies according to the place the signifier occupies in this chain. To Lacan, psychoanalysis and literature share the same object of study: the human subject. Literature dramatizes human subjectivity, whereas psychoanalysis strives to discern the fundamental structures that constitute such subjectivity. Likewise, both literature and psychoanalysis are concerned with the rhetorical and semiotic dimension underpinning human thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Lacan viewed literature and psychoanalysis as two different types of discourse with the same purpose: to dismantle the existing discursive mechanisms underlying knowledge, power, and social relations.

Psychoanalytic criticism produces a better sense of literature by addressing one or more of four minds: that of the author, that of the character, that of the reader, and that of the text. In Lacan, the essentialist view of identity fades in favor of a constructivist approach to subjectivity in which language becomes the emblematic medium. What matters is what characters say or do, not what they are. Upon reflection, we believe that Freudian and Jungian theories are valuable, but that Lacanian psychoanalysis is more in line with our scholarly concerns. Lacan’s psycho-discursive approach helps illuminate the ways in which texts can take on a life of their own, adding texture to literary analysis. Particularly suited to the postmodern genre, it offers deeper insights into the human possibilities of great literature. As Ehsan Azari has aptly put it, “Many key Lacanian concepts have been articulated through the mediation of, or in direct dialogue with, literature. This, no doubt, reflects Lacan’s emphasis on the ascendancy of literature over psychoanalysis, and its leading role in the articulation of psychoanalytic theory.”²⁴ Literature is the cornerstone of psychoanalytic theory, which in turn contributes to understanding literature. Comparing Lacan and Freud, Azari states: Lacan’s approach to literature diverts from the predetermined Freudian applied psychoanalysis and psychobiography. On the contrary, Lacan’s textual reading varies from text to text and develops a critical process where both literary dramatization and psychoanalytic truth flow side by side. This is the major difference between Lacan’s literature and literary theory and the literary interpretation of orthodox psychoanalysis.²⁵

In light of the aforementioned quotation, Azari emphasizes the limitations of traditional Freudian interpretations that rely heavily on biographical data. In contrast, he emphasizes Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, which places greater emphasis on textual discourse. Our interest in psychoanalytic criticism has expanded to encompass neuropsychology. Our understanding of acting has been significantly enhanced by considering how the spectator appreciates theatrical productions. Neuropsychological approaches to theater can be situated at the nexus between the performing arts and the sciences. Psychoanalysts currently employ novel theatrical analogies, such as the analytic stage and the theater of the mind.

The future of psychoanalytic criticism may be found in the integration of the discoveries of cognitive science with the findings of psychoanalysis. Cognitive science represents the other pillar of evolutionary psychology, and Lacan was among the first psychoanalysts to discuss this discipline. In more recent times, scholars and critics have endeavored to interpret psychoanalytic principles from a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives within the domains of cognitive neuroscience and neuropsychology. Gerald Maurice Edelman, a distinguished developmental neuroscientist, prefaced his latest book with the following thought:

²⁰ Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), p. 266.

²¹ Lacan, *Le séminaire, Livre XXIII: Le sinthome* (Paris, Seuil, 2005), p. 31.

²² Lacan, *Conferences in North American Universities: December 2, 1975 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology*, published in Scilicet, 1975, n° 6-7, pp. 53-63. Translated by Jack W. Stone.

²³ *Ecrits*, p. 265.

²⁴ Ehsan Azari, *Lacan and the Destiny of Literature: Desire, Jouissance and the Sinthome in Shakespeare, Donne, Joyce and Ashbery* (London: Continuum Books, 2008), p. 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

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We are at the beginning of the neuroscientific revolution. At the end we should know how the mind works, what governs our nature, and how we know the world. Indeed, what is now going on in neuroscience may be looked at as a prelude to the largest possible scientific revolution, one with inevitable and important social consequences.²⁶

Cognitive science has yielded new insights into literary criticism. However, its implications for theatrical study and artistry are not without limitations. The majority of neuroscientists espouse a strong belief in causality and determinism, maintaining that minds are simply the result of brain activity, with mental life being controlled by the laws of biology and chemistry. We believe, however, that such a perspective is marred by essentialist biases and reductionism, as it is understood to be merely mind-based. Consequently, we have adopted a position that is neither wholly mind-based nor wholly social, but rather one that considers cognition as interactive, physically embodied, and embedded in our social environment.

Psychoanalytic lenses have allowed us to examine Shakespeare's hero, Hamlet. Drawing on Freudian and Lacanian readings, Hamlet seems to illustrate how Shakespeare illuminates the emotional potentialities of his hero on stage. Hamlet's reluctance to avenge his father's death is a consequence of his divided consciousness, which manifests itself in his identification with the murderer. The symbolic function of Claudius is elucidated as he becomes the embodiment of Hamlet's unconscious incestuous urges and repressed patricidal desires. This exemplifies the Oedipus complex. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud wrote:

Hamlet is able to do anything—except take vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized. Thus the loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish.²⁷

Other critics will be included here, such as the Freudian Alfred Ernest Jones who scrutinized Hamlet's mind in his book, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949), and Julia Reinhard Lupton and Kenneth Reinhard who have recently enriched psychoanalytic theater with their study titled *After Oedipus: Shakespeare and Psychoanalysis* (1993). Furthermore, Norman Holland and Arthur Kirsch have examined other psychoanalytic themes present in the play, including narcissism. *Hamlet* has also been interpreted by scholars through the lenses of the post-Freudian thinker, Lacan.

By drawing upon the concepts of psychoanalysis, Shakespeare's domestic tragedy *Othello* illuminates Iago's morbid drive, which Freud refers to as "Thanatos." While sexual jealousy is not the primary motivating factor in the murder of Desdemona, the triangular oedipal structure of envy plays a significant role. This structure emerges as an unconscious consequence of the disavowal of castration. Othello experiences a figurative castration anxiety, which causes him to be terrified of losing his powerful rank in Venice. Another psychoanalytic concept that is intricately intertwined with Othello's obsessive preoccupation with his own phallic authority is his metaphorical passage through the mirror stage. His shattered self-image of a betrayed husband symbolically castrates him before he ultimately realizes that his doubt regarding his beloved's disloyalty has been a fatal illusion. Shakespeare deftly exploits the discrepancy between the sensuality of his stagecraft and the unconscious revelations it allows. The dramatization of desire, revenge, and death expresses a discourse that resists verbalization. The veiling/unveiling process is worthy of study in light of psychoanalysis, given that the tragic hero is driven by his cardinal passions to the point of his inexorable downfall. The tragic protagonist is rendered blind by the very forces that drive him to act. His consciousness is cut off from his unconscious mind, which ultimately makes him lose his agent status.

A noteworthy convergence is occurring between psychoanalysis and theater, with both disciplines serving as vehicles for healing. Classic Greek and Roman tragedy presented the enduring questions of life and death, man and existence, in a manner that instructed audiences on how to cope with them. Both theater and psychoanalysis are performed in a repetitive manner, either in a consulting room or in a theatrical space. By analyzing the plays in psychoanalytic terms, theater becomes a third space where actors are able to mentally act out the spectators' fears, fantasies, and contradictions. Theater is one of the most elevated cultural forms of expression, celebrating humanity and reflecting both the beauty and the ugliness of our world. The Aristotelian concept of catharsis, which posits that the balance between order and chaos, emotions and thoughts, is essential to the aesthetic experience of theater, remains a highly relevant theory in the field of theater theory and practice. Theater serves as a conduit for the exorcism of the unconscious entanglement with the spectator's archaic obsessions (*archaia*). The therapeutic effect is purgation, which allows for the discharge of pent-up impulses. Catharsis is analogous to the Freudian concept of abreaction, which refers to the purgation of emotions, mainly pity and fear, attached to a previously repressed experience. This phenomenon occurs when the spectator assumes a position of voyeuristic jouissance at a safe distance from the stage. This oscillation between proximity and distance is the central concern of our investigation, which also leads us to draw upon Bertolt Brecht's concept of the alienation effect in his epic theater.

Theater of cruelty, as developed by Antonin Artaud, flourished during the 1930s in an attempt to supplant the bourgeois classic theater. The originality of this surrealist theater lies in its capacity to elicit responses in both audiences and performers that originate from the subconscious, thereby facilitating the expulsion of deeply rooted anxieties. The theater of cruelty is based on

²⁶ Gerald Edelman, *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire: On the Matter of the Mind*, Basic Books, 1992, xiii.

²⁷ Freud, "The Dream Work," In: *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. James Strachey, New York: Avon, 1965, p. 299.

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myth and fantasy and is a reconstitution of primitive ritual ceremonies. Its aim is to provoke the spectator's self-disclosure. The text is marginalized, with greater emphasis placed on improvised, symbolic gestures and sounds. Similarly, the work refutes rational interpretation, advocating instead for the expression of irrational impulses and theatricality to challenge the certainties of the audience. As will be demonstrated, Artaud and Arrabal were not driven by sadistic impulses but sought to shockingly confront the audience with the dark, terrifying emptiness that lies at the core of humanity and language. A true Artaudian play disrupts the spectator's tranquility of the mind and the senses, thereby bringing the inner demons of the unconscious to the surface. An analysis of Artaud's theater from a psychoanalytic perspective will lead to the invocation of Freud's theories, as Artaud's theater is designed to awaken the dormant dream images of our unconscious for the purpose of catharsis.

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