

➡ Dreams

Freud wrote a book called "The Interpretation of Dreams". During sleeping, the components of our consciousness and our unconsciousness mingle. A dream takes place when two similar constructs match with each other. Hamlet says: "A dream is but a shadow". A nightmare takes place when two different constructs clash.

It seems natural to think about novels in terms of dreams. Like dreams, novels are fictions, inventions of the mind that, although based on reality, are, by definition, not literally true. Like a novel, a dream may have some truth to tell, but, like a novel, it may need to be interpreted before that truth can be grasped.

Freud is one of the reasons it seems "natural" to think of literary works in terms of dreams. We are all Freudians, really, whether we have read anything by Freud or not. At one time or another, most of us have referred to ego, libido, complexes, unconscious desires, and sexual repression. What Freud did was develop a language that described, a model that explained, a theory that surrounded human psychology.

➡ Repression

According to Freud, all of us have repressed wishes and fears; we all have dreams in which repressed feelings and memories emerge disguised, and thus we are all potential candidates for dream analysis. One of the unconscious desires most repressed is the childhood wish to displace the parent of our own sex and take his or her place in the affections of the parent of the opposite sex. For example, when the child finds out that his father shares him with the mother, an Oedipus complex starts to form inside him with hatred towards the father. This desire really involves several different but related wishes and fears. This causes a psychological disorder while growing up turns into illness.

What the ego and superego tell us not to do or think is repressed, forced into the unconscious mind. One of Freud's most important contributions to the study of the psyche, the theory of repression, goes something like this: much of what lies in the unconscious mind has been put there by consciousness, which acts as a censor, driving underground unconscious or conscious thoughts or instincts that it deems unacceptable. Repression is stored inside our Id. When we have repressed