

# Psychological Disorders and Object-Loss in Anita Brookner's *Fraud*: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation

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## Abstract

This paper examines the psychological disorders depicted in Anita Brookner's novel *Fraud* through the lens of psychoanalytic theory. Drawing primarily on the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, the study analyzes the origins and manifestations of the protagonist Anna Durrant's psychological disturbances. The analysis focuses on two main dimensions: anxiety-related disorders and psychological disturbances generated by object-loss. First, the article explores how anxiety produces behavioural symptoms, such as anorexia and insomnia, revealing the role of repression, desire, and unconscious conflict. Second, it investigates the effects of actual loss, particularly the loss of parental figures, and demonstrates how these experiences generate melancholia and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. By examining Anna's relationship with her mother and father, the paper shows how unresolved emotional attachments shape her identity and behaviour. Ultimately, the study highlights the intricate relationship between literature and psychoanalysis, demonstrating how Brookner's narrative offers a compelling illustration of psychoanalytic concepts related to loss, desire, and identity.

## Keywords

Psychoanalysis, Object-Loss, Anxiety, Melancholia, Anita Brookner

## 1. Introduction

Literature has long offered a privileged space for representing psychological conflict and subjective experience. Within literary criticism, psychoanalysis has been widely used as an interpretive framework to examine how unconscious conflict, repression, anxiety, and loss shape behaviour and identity (Freud, 1968; Freud,

1997; Lacan, 1966; Tyson, 2015).

Among contemporary novelists, Anita Brookner is known for psychologically detailed portrayals of solitary and introspective characters, often structured around memory, retrospection, and internal perception (Bloom, 2009). Her novel *Fraud* is emblematic of this approach: through a narrative built on flashbacks and reflective consciousness, it provides an especially rich portrayal of a protagonist whose conduct and inner life are marked by restraint, loneliness, and unresolved attachments (Brookner, 1993).

Psychoanalytic theory provides conceptual tools for analyzing such a character. Freud's work is central here, particularly his account of anxiety as a signal of danger and as a mechanism linked to symptoms, inhibition, and defensive strategies (Freud, 1926; see also Freud, 1968). In addition, Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia remains influential for understanding pathological reactions to loss, especially when the loss is not fully conscious or when identification with the lost object transforms the individual's relation to the self (Freud, 1968; Fiorini, Bokanowski, & Lewkowicz, 2009). Complementarily, Lacanian perspectives highlight the structuring role of early parental relationships and the symbolic order in shaping subjectivity and intersubjective relations (Lacan, 1966; Bannet, 1989).

This study adopts a qualitative psychoanalytic literary analysis of Anita Brookner's novel *Fraud* (Brookner, 1993). The corpus of analysis consists of key narrative passages depicting Anna Durrant's behaviour, memories, dreams, and interpersonal interactions. Scenes were selected when they explicitly portray psychological symptoms (such as eating disturbances or insomnia), emotionally charged relationships with parental figures, or symbolic representations of desire and loss. These passages are interpreted through established psychoanalytic concepts—particularly anxiety, repression, melancholia, and object-loss as defined in Freudian and Lacanian theory (Freud, 1968; Freud, 1997; Lacan, 1966). In this framework, textual evidence includes narrative descriptions, character reflections, dreams, and recurrent symbolic motifs, which are analyzed as literary representations of underlying psychological conflicts.

Recent scholarship has continued to explore psychoanalytic approaches to literature, particularly in relation to melancholia, object relations, and narrative representations of loss. Studies have shown how psychoanalytic concepts remain productive for analyzing literary depictions of grief, ambivalence, and identity formation in contemporary criticism (Waller, 2024; Ahern, 2024; Dibekulu, 2025). Situating the present analysis within this evolving field highlights the continuing relevance of psychoanalytic frameworks for interpreting literary representations of psychological conflict.

Within this theoretical framework, the present paper examines the psychological troubles experienced by Anna Durrant in *Fraud*. The analysis is organised around two dimensions that emerge from the narrative. First, it explores anxiety-related psychological disturbances—particularly anorexia and insomnia—as

symptomatic formations linked to repression, desire, and defensive control (Freud, 1926; Freud, 1997; Eagleton, 2008). Second, it investigates psychological disturbances associated with actual loss, focusing on object-loss and its consequences, including melancholic traits and relational difficulties (Freud, 1968). By articulating these concepts with Brookner's narrative representation, the paper aims to show how *Fraud* functions as a literary site where psychoanalytic models of anxiety, loss, and identity formation can be read with precision (Brookner, 1993; Barry, 1995).

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Psychoanalytic Concepts of Anxiety and Loss

Psychoanalysis provides an important theoretical framework for interpreting literary representations of psychological conflict. Since the early twentieth century, Freudian theory has been widely applied to literature in order to explore the unconscious motivations of fictional characters, the symbolic meaning of dreams, and the psychological consequences of repression and loss (Freud, 1997; Barry, 1995; Holland, 1990). Through this perspective, literary narratives can be read as spaces where unconscious processes, desires, and conflicts become visible (Rivkin & Ryan, 2017).

### 2.1. Anxiety and Repression

In Freudian theory, anxiety is understood as a psychological signal that alerts the individual to the presence of danger, whether external or internal. According to Freud, anxiety emerges when repressed desires or conflicts threaten to enter consciousness and challenge the defensive structures of the psyche (Freud, 1926; Freud, 1997). The ego therefore develops defence mechanisms designed to prevent these impulses from becoming conscious.

Repression plays a central role in this process. Freud describes repression as a mechanism through which unacceptable desires, fears, or conflicts are pushed out of consciousness and maintained in the unconscious. However, repression does not eliminate these impulses. Instead, they continue to influence behaviour indirectly, often manifesting themselves through symptoms such as dreams, phobias, or psychosomatic disorders (Freud, 1997).

Dreams occupy a particularly important place in Freud's theory because they represent a privileged path through which unconscious desires can emerge. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud argues that dreams allow repressed wishes to find symbolic expression, though they appear in disguised forms due to mechanisms such as displacement and condensation (Freud, 1997). Displacement refers to the process by which emotional significance is transferred from one object or idea to another that is symbolically related to it (Barry, 1995). Through such mechanisms, unconscious conflicts are transformed into symbolic images that may appear in dreams or other mental representations.

These theoretical concepts provide a useful framework for analyzing psycho-

logical symptoms depicted in literary characters. Symptoms such as eating disorders, sleep disturbances, or compulsive behaviours may therefore be interpreted as manifestations of deeper unconscious conflicts and anxieties.

## 2.2. Object-Loss, Mourning, and Melancholia

Another central concept in Freudian psychoanalysis is object-loss. In psychoanalytic terminology, an “object” refers not to a physical object but to a person or figure toward whom emotional attachment is directed. The loss of such an object—whether through death, separation, or emotional withdrawal—can profoundly affect the psychological structure of the individual (Freud, 1968).

Freud distinguishes between two possible psychological responses to object-loss: mourning and melancholia. Mourning represents a normal and temporary reaction to the loss of a loved object. During the process of mourning, the individual gradually withdraws emotional attachment from the lost object and eventually redirects this emotional energy toward new relationships or interests (Freud, 1968; Rubovits-Seitz, 1999).

Melancholia, by contrast, represents a pathological reaction to loss. In melancholia, the individual does not fully recognise or consciously identify the nature of the loss. Instead of redirecting emotional energy toward new objects, the libido withdraws into the ego and produces an identification between the ego and the lost object (Freud, 1968; Fiorini et al., 2009). This process results in characteristic symptoms such as loss of self-esteem, self-reproach, and persistent feelings of worthlessness.

Freud emphasises that the melancholic subject often directs hostility toward the self, even though this hostility is originally directed toward the lost object. Self-criticism and feelings of guilt therefore conceal a deeper ambivalence toward the loved object. This ambivalence—simultaneous love and resentment—plays a crucial role in the development of melancholia (Freud, 1968).

## 2.3. Parental Relationships and the Formation of Subjectivity

Beyond Freud’s theory of loss, later psychoanalytic thinkers emphasised the fundamental role of early parental relationships in shaping the individual’s psychological structure (Winnicott, 1992). Lacanian theory, in particular, highlights the importance of the symbolic order and the paternal function in structuring subjectivity and regulating interpersonal relations (Lacan, 1966).

According to Lacan, the father represents the symbolic authority that introduces the child into social and linguistic structures. This process allows the child to move beyond the initial dyadic relationship with the mother and to enter a broader system of symbolic relations that organise identity and desire (Lacan, 1966). When this process is disrupted, difficulties may arise in the development of identity and in the individual’s capacity to establish stable relationships with others.

More specifically, this analysis draws on Lacan’s concept of the paternal func-

tion, often referred to as the “Name-of-the-Father”, which introduces the child into the symbolic order and mediates separation from the maternal relationship (Lacan, 1966). In *Fraud*, the narrative repeatedly suggests that this symbolic function is fragile or incomplete for Anna. A revealing moment occurs when Anna describes her persistent search for a silent and protective male figure who could replace the absent father. This narrative motif indicates that the paternal function has not been fully internalised as a stabilising symbolic authority. As a result, Anna continues to project the image of the lost father onto later male figures such as Halliday or Ainsworth. These figures therefore function not simply as romantic possibilities but as substitutes for the missing paternal position within Anna’s psychic structure.

Structuralist interpretations of Lacanian theory have further emphasised how the symbolic order determines both personal identity and interpersonal relations (Bannet, 1989; Žižek, 1992). From this perspective, the absence or disruption of parental figures may lead to psychological instability and relational difficulties later in life.

Taken together, these psychoanalytic concepts—anxiety, repression, object-loss, melancholia, and parental identification—provide the theoretical foundation for analysing the psychological disturbances represented in Anita Brookner’s *Fraud*. They allow the character’s behaviour to be interpreted not simply as personal weakness but as the result of deeper unconscious conflicts related to attachment, desire, and loss.

### **3. Anxiety-Related Psychological Disorders in *Fraud***

The narrative of *Fraud* provides several indications that the protagonist, Anna Durrant, suffers from psychological disturbances linked to anxiety.

In this study, the terms “anorexia” and “insomnia” are not used as clinical diagnoses in a medical sense. Rather, they function as literary and psychodynamic descriptors of behavioural patterns represented in the narrative. The analysis therefore refers to anorexic behaviour and insomnia-like sleep disturbances as symbolic manifestations of anxiety and repression within the fictional character, rather than as medically established psychiatric conditions.

Within a psychoanalytic framework, anxiety can be understood as a reaction to an internal conflict or a perceived threat to the ego. When unconscious desires or fears threaten to surface, the ego deploys defence mechanisms that may result in behavioural or psychosomatic symptoms (Freud, 1926; Freud, 1997). In Brookner’s novel, anxiety manifests itself primarily through two types of disturbances: an eating disorder and a sleep disorder.

#### **3.1. Eating Disturbance: Anorexic Behaviour**

One of the most striking aspects of Anna’s psychological condition is her relationship to food. Although anorexia is not presented as the central theme of the narrative, several scenes suggest that Anna avoids eating and displays behaviour con-

sistent with an eating disorder. Early references to her condition appear when other characters notice her reluctance to eat during social gatherings. For example, during a lunch invitation, she delicately plays with her food while avoiding actual consumption, suggesting an underlying discomfort associated with eating (Brookner, 1993).

The narrative later connects this behaviour to a recurring dream experienced by Anna. In this dream, she is offered a slice of cake that conceals a wedding ring. The dream produces anxiety because she fears that by eating the cake she might swallow the ring and thus lose the possibility of marriage (Brookner, 1993). From a psychoanalytic perspective, dreams represent symbolic expressions of repressed wishes or conflicts that seek to emerge from the unconscious (Freud, 1997). The elements of the dream may therefore be interpreted symbolically rather than literally.

Freud argues that unconscious conflicts often appear in dreams through mechanisms such as displacement, where one object symbolically represents another (Freud, 1997; Barry, 1995). In Anna's case, the cake may represent her desire for emotional attachment and maternal approval, while the wedding ring symbolises the possibility of marriage and adult independence. The anxiety generated by the dream suggests a conflict between two opposing desires: the wish to remain devoted to her mother and the wish to establish her own independent life through marriage.

From a Freudian perspective, this episode illustrates the mechanism of repression combined with displacement. The symptom-Anna's anorexic behaviour-can be interpreted as the behavioural expression of an unconscious conflict between filial devotion and the desire for marital independence. Because this conflict cannot be consciously resolved, the ego mobilises a defensive strategy by restricting appetite. In this sense, the refusal of food functions as a symbolic defence against desire, allowing the ego to maintain control over impulses perceived as threatening.

This conflict produces anxiety because the fulfilment of one desire necessarily threatens the other. If Anna remains emotionally attached to her mother, she risks losing the possibility of marriage. Conversely, pursuing marriage would imply abandoning the maternal relationship that has defined her identity. Her avoidance of food may therefore function symbolically as a refusal of desire itself. By controlling her appetite, Anna attempts to restrain emotional impulses that she perceives as dangerous or morally problematic.

Another dimension of Anna's anorexia appears in her perception of desire in other women. She repeatedly associates physical appetite with sexual desire, particularly when describing characters such as Vickie, whose behaviour she interprets as greedy and sexually assertive (Brookner, 1993). This association suggests that Anna perceives desire as morally threatening. By refusing food, she symbolically distances herself from the realm of desire and sexuality.

In psychoanalytic terms, such behaviour may be interpreted as an attempt to

preserve the authority of the superego by suppressing impulses associated with desire and autonomy. Anna's eating disorder thus appears as a defensive mechanism designed to control anxiety and maintain psychological stability.

### 3.2. Sleep Disturbance: Insomnia-Like Symptoms

Alongside her eating disorder, Anna also suffers from sleep disturbances. Insomnia is another symptom frequently associated with anxiety and internal conflict. In the novel, Anna often relies on sleeping pills to obtain rest, suggesting that natural sleep exposes her to psychological discomfort (Brookner, 1993).

Freud emphasised that dreams represent a form of regression in which unconscious wishes become more directly expressed.

In Freudian terms, this situation reflects the defensive function of repression in relation to dream activity. The symptom—insomnia-like sleep disturbance—emerges because the ego anticipates the anxiety produced when repressed wishes surface during dreaming. Sleep therefore becomes a threatening psychic state. By resisting sleep, the ego attempts to prevent the emergence of unconscious material, thereby maintaining repression and protecting the subject from anxiety.

During sleep, the mechanisms of repression weaken, allowing repressed desires to emerge in symbolic form (Freud, 1997). For individuals experiencing strong internal conflict, this process may generate anxiety rather than relief. As a result, sleep itself becomes a threatening state.

Anna's experience of insomnia appears closely linked to this dynamic. After nights of natural sleep, she reports feeling oppressed by memories and by a sense of personal inadequacy. By contrast, sleep induced by medication produces a temporary sense of relief and optimism (Brookner, 1993). This contrast suggests that natural sleep allows unconscious conflicts to resurface, whereas artificial sleep suppresses them.

Her dreams frequently involve themes of inadequacy and comparison with other women. Anna often perceives herself as inferior to socially confident female characters, particularly in relation to femininity and romantic relationships. This perception reinforces her sense of deficiency and contributes to her anxiety regarding her own identity as a woman (Young, 1994).

Freudian theory suggests that when unconscious wishes conflict with moral or social prohibitions, the ego may respond by repressing these wishes in order to avoid anxiety (Freud, 1926). However, repression does not eliminate the wish itself. Instead, the conflict continues to operate beneath the surface, producing psychological tension that may manifest through symptoms such as insomnia.

In Anna's case, insomnia can therefore be interpreted as a defensive response to the threat posed by unconscious desires. Sleep exposes her to dreams in which repressed wishes may appear, and the anxiety generated by these dreams disrupts her ability to maintain restful sleep. Her insomnia thus reflects the broader psychological struggle between desire, repression, and moral self-discipline.

## 4. Psychological Disorders Caused by Object-Loss

Beyond anxiety-related disturbances, the psychological difficulties experienced by Anna Durrant in *Fraud* can also be interpreted through the psychoanalytic concept of object-loss. In psychoanalysis, the term “object” refers to a person toward whom emotional attachment is directed. The loss of such an object may generate profound psychological consequences, particularly when the attachment is intense or unresolved (Freud, 1968). In Brookner’s narrative, the psychological development of Anna is strongly influenced by the loss or absence of parental figures. These experiences shape her identity, emotional attachments, and relationships with others.

### 4.1. Loss of the Mother and Melancholia

The relationship between Anna and her mother Amy plays a central role in the protagonist’s psychological life. Anna’s emotional attachment to her mother is characterised by devotion, sacrifice, and dependence. She dedicates much of her life to caring for her mother, often suppressing her own personal aspirations in order to maintain this relationship (Brookner, 1993).

Psychoanalytic theory suggests that intense attachment to a loved object may generate psychological vulnerability when the relationship becomes unstable or disappointing. Freud’s theory of mourning and melancholia provides an important framework for understanding such reactions. According to Freud, mourning represents a normal response to the loss of a loved object, whereas melancholia constitutes a pathological reaction in which the individual internalises the lost object and directs hostility toward the self (Freud, 1968).

In melancholia, the subject often experiences a loss that is not fully conscious. The individual may know whom they have lost but may not fully understand what has been lost in the relationship. As Freud explains, the melancholic subject frequently exhibits symptoms such as loss of self-esteem, feelings of worthlessness, and persistent self-reproach (Freud, 1968; Fiorini et al., 2009).

Several elements of Anna’s behaviour correspond to these characteristics. Throughout the novel, she repeatedly expresses feelings of inadequacy and describes herself as a useless woman who has failed to fulfil conventional expectations of femininity, such as marriage or motherhood (Brookner, 1993). These self-accusations may be interpreted, in psychoanalytic terms, as disguised expressions of hostility toward the lost object.

Freud argues that in melancholia the ego identifies with the lost object, creating a situation in which criticism directed at the object becomes self-criticism. In this way, hostility toward the loved object is redirected toward the self (Freud, 1968). Anna’s sense of worthlessness may therefore reflect deeper ambivalence toward her mother.

Indeed, although Anna appears deeply devoted to Amy, the relationship is marked by emotional imbalance. Amy is absorbed in her own grief and later in her romantic involvement with Ainsworth, leaving Anna emotionally neglected.

The attention and recognition that Anna seeks from her mother are therefore only partially fulfilled. This emotional disappointment generates a conflict between love and resentment, which psychoanalysis identifies as ambivalence.

Such ambivalence is characteristic of melancholic states. The individual simultaneously maintains attachment to the lost object while harbouring unconscious hostility toward it. Anna's self-reproach and emotional withdrawal may thus be interpreted as manifestations of melancholia resulting from the perceived loss of maternal affection.

#### **4.2. Loss of the Father and Relational Difficulties**

In addition to the complex relationship with her mother, Anna's psychological development is also shaped by the absence of her father. Anna's father died when she was very young, leaving her with only limited memories of him (Brookner, 1993). Although this loss appears distant in time, psychoanalytic theory emphasises that early parental relationships play a fundamental role in the formation of subjectivity.

Freudian theory describes the Oedipus complex as a crucial stage in childhood development, during which the child experiences emotional attachment toward the parent of the opposite sex and rivalry toward the parent of the same sex. The resolution of this stage allows the child to redirect emotional attachment toward external relationships and to integrate into broader social structures (Freud, 1997).

The premature loss of the father may disrupt this developmental process. Without the paternal figure, the child may remain psychologically attached to the maternal relationship and experience difficulties in forming independent emotional bonds later in life.

Lacanian theory further emphasises the symbolic role of the father in structuring subjectivity. According to Lacan, the paternal function introduces the child into the symbolic order, enabling the separation from the maternal relationship and facilitating the development of autonomous identity (Lacan, 1966). When this symbolic function is weakened or absent, the individual may encounter difficulties in negotiating interpersonal relationships and social roles.

Anna's relationship with men throughout the novel reflects such difficulties. She repeatedly seeks male figures who embody an idealised image of a silent and protective father, yet these relationships remain unfulfilled. Men in the narrative often appear as distant or absent figures who fail to meet her expectations (Brookner, 1993).

This recurring pattern suggests that Anna attempts to reproduce an unconscious image of the lost father. However, because this image remains unattainable, her relationships with men are characterised by frustration and emotional distance. Her disappointment may even develop into hostility toward male figures who remind her of earlier experiences of abandonment.

Thus, Anna's psychological difficulties can be interpreted as partly rooted in the unresolved consequences of paternal loss. The absence of a stable paternal figure prevents the successful restructuring of emotional attachments and contributes to her persistent relational instability.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of *Fraud* through a psychoanalytic perspective reveals the extent to which Anita Brookner's narrative illustrates several key psychological mechanisms described in Freudian theory. The character of Anna Durrant embodies a range of psychological disturbances that can be interpreted as manifestations of anxiety, repression, and object-loss. Rather than presenting these elements as isolated narrative traits, the novel integrates them into a coherent psychological portrait that reflects complex unconscious dynamics.

First, the analysis of Anna's eating disorder and insomnia demonstrates how anxiety may manifest through behavioural symptoms. Freud describes anxiety as a signal of internal conflict and as a response to the threat posed by repressed desires attempting to emerge into consciousness (Freud, 1926; Freud, 1997). In the novel, Anna's anorexia and insomnia appear to function as defensive strategies that allow her to maintain strict control over impulses associated with desire, sexuality, and autonomy. Her refusal of food symbolically reflects an attempt to restrain desire itself, while her fear of natural sleep indicates anxiety toward the unconscious wishes that dreams may reveal.

Second, the concept of object-loss provides a crucial interpretive framework for understanding Anna's deeper psychological state. Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia helps explain the character's persistent feelings of inadequacy and self-reproach (Freud, 1968). Anna's melancholic disposition appears linked to her complex relationship with her mother, whose emotional distance and preoccupation with her own grief create a situation of frustrated attachment. In this context, Anna internalises the lost object and directs criticism toward herself, illustrating the Freudian mechanism through which hostility toward the lost object is transformed into self-reproach.

Furthermore, the absence of the paternal figure contributes to Anna's relational difficulties and emotional instability. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, the father plays a fundamental role in structuring subjectivity and facilitating the transition from the maternal relationship to broader social interactions (Lacan, 1966). The early loss of Anna's father therefore disrupts this developmental process and contributes to her difficulties in establishing stable relationships with men. The recurrent pattern of disappointment in her relationships suggests an unconscious attempt to recover an idealised paternal figure that remains unattainable.

Taken together, these elements demonstrate how Brookner's narrative engages with psychoanalytic themes related to desire, repression, and loss. The novel does not simply portray psychological suffering but also illustrates the mechanisms through which early emotional experiences shape adult identity and interpersonal

relationships. Through the character of Anna Durrant, *Fraud* offers a literary representation of psychological processes that closely parallel theoretical descriptions found in psychoanalytic literature.

More broadly, this analysis highlights the productive dialogue between literature and psychoanalysis. Literary narratives often provide rich representations of subjective experience that allow theoretical concepts to be explored in concrete and emotionally nuanced contexts. In this sense, Brookner's work contributes to a deeper understanding of how unconscious conflicts, parental relationships, and unresolved loss may influence human behaviour and identity formation.

### **Limitations**

This study also acknowledges certain interpretive limitations inherent in psychoanalytic literary analysis. Because the object of study is a fictional character rather than a clinical subject, the concepts of anxiety, melancholia, and repression are used as interpretive frameworks rather than as clinical diagnoses. The analysis therefore distinguishes between textual evidence—such as narrative descriptions, dreams, and patterns of character interaction—and psychoanalytic interpretation derived from theoretical models (Freud, 1968; Lacan, 1966). While psychoanalytic concepts help illuminate possible psychological dynamics represented in the narrative, they do not claim to establish a medical or psychiatric assessment of the character. The objective of this approach is instead to analyse how literary representation engages with psychological ideas and symbolic structures.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study has examined the psychological disturbances depicted in Anita Brookner's novel *Fraud* through the lens of psychoanalytic theory. By focusing on the character of Anna Durrant, the analysis has shown how the narrative illustrates several key psychoanalytic concepts related to anxiety, repression, and object-loss.

The first part of the analysis demonstrated that anxiety plays a central role in the protagonist's psychological condition. Anna's anorexia and insomnia can be interpreted as behavioural manifestations of internal conflicts between desire and repression. These symptoms reflect the defensive strategies through which the ego attempts to maintain control over impulses perceived as threatening. Within a Freudian framework, such disturbances illustrate how repressed desires continue to operate indirectly through symbolic forms, such as dreams, bodily symptoms, and behavioural patterns.

The second part of the study examined the psychological consequences of object-loss. The analysis highlighted the importance of Anna's relationship with her mother and the emotional disappointment associated with that relationship. Through the concept of melancholia, Freud's theory provides a framework for understanding Anna's persistent self-reproach and feelings of inadequacy. These elements illustrate the process through which hostility toward a loved object may be internalised and transformed into self-criticism.

In addition, the absence of the paternal figure contributes to the protagonist's

relational difficulties. From both Freudian and Lacanian perspectives, the father plays a crucial role in structuring the subject's relationship to desire and social identity. The early loss of Anna's father disrupts this process and contributes to the character's difficulties in establishing stable emotional relationships in adulthood.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that *Fraud* provides a particularly rich literary illustration of psychoanalytic concepts related to anxiety, loss, and identity formation. Brookner's narrative shows how early emotional experiences and unresolved attachments may shape individual behaviour and psychological development. By combining literary analysis with psychoanalytic theory, this study also highlights the broader dialogue between literature and psychology, showing how literary texts can serve as valuable sites for exploring complex psychological processes.

Future research could further explore the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and contemporary literary representations of psychological suffering, particularly in narratives centred on loneliness, identity formation, and interpersonal relationships.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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