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## Analysis of The Main Character Ava Alessandra in Ika Natassa's Novel Heartbreak Motel

### Abstract

*Heartbreak Motel*, a romantic drama written by Ika Natassa, follows the emotional journey of Ava Alessandra, an actress dedicated to embodying every character she portrays. Ava immerses herself in various acting techniques and confronts a wide range of emotions experienced by her roles. This analysis delves into the painful experiences faced by the protagonist, examined through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Freud's model explores the dynamic interactions between the id, ego, and superego three elements that shape the human psyche, each influenced by different factors, including traumatic experiences. The purpose of this study is to analyze how the protagonist's id, ego, and superego interact and manifest through defense mechanisms in response to trauma. A qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method was employed. Data were gathered in the form of narrative excerpts that directly support the study's objectives. The findings reveal that the protagonist's traumatic experiences significantly influence the function of the id, ego, and superego, particularly through the defense mechanisms of repression, sublimation, and introjection. The study also highlights the impact of trauma on the character's psychological development and her social interactions, offering insights into how fictional experiences reflect real-life psychological struggles.

**Keyword:** Main Character, Ava Alessandra, Ika Natassa's Novel, Heartbreak Motel

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature serves as a profound reflection of human existence—it not only captures external events but also delves into the inner world and psychological conflicts of its characters. In literary works, emotional pain, psychological wounds, and inner turmoil often play a crucial role in character development. One of the most relevant approaches to analyzing the psychological dimensions of characters is literary psychology, particularly through Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

According to Suwardi Endraswara (2011, p. 96), literary psychology views literature as a medium containing various psychological phenomena exhibited by its characters. This approach enables readers to uncover characters' internal struggles, emotional tensions, and psychological trauma. Endraswara emphasizes that literature is inseparable from psychological elements, as both the creative and interpretive processes are heavily influenced by the psychological state of the author and the characters.

Albertine Minderop (2010) adds that Freud's psychoanalytic theory is a valuable tool for analyzing literary characters, as it reveals the subconscious aspects of the human psyche—

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those hidden impulses, unresolved wounds, and repressed desires. Freud divides the human personality into three key components: the id, which represents instinctual urges; the **ego**, which mediates with reality; and the superego, which embodies moral values and social norms. These three elements often conflict with one another, especially when a person faces unresolved trauma or severe psychological stress.

*Heartbreak Motel*, a novel by Ika Natassa, introduces Ava Alessandra as its main character a woman grappling with emotional crises rooted in past trauma. Ava is portrayed as anxious, distrustful, and haunted by memories of her past. Childhood trauma, failed relationships, and social pressure contribute to her emotional instability, which is reflected in her cold demeanor, impulsive actions, and recurring moral dilemmas. From Freud's perspective, such trauma manifests as unconscious denial of unresolved experiences, reappearing through anxiety, dreams, and irrational behavior. Abrams, M. H. (2024).

This analysis applies Freud's framework to explore how Ava's id, ego, and superego interact and how trauma affects her personality structure. It also investigates the ego defense mechanisms (such as denial, projection, and repression) that Ava employs to shield herself from painful realities. By drawing on Freud's theory and insights from Indonesian literary scholars such as Endraswara and Minderop, this study aims to uncover the psychological dimensions of Ava's character and enrich the reader's understanding of trauma in literature.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyze the main character in a literary work particularly Ava Alessandra in *Heartbreak Motel* by Ika Natassa a relevant theoretical foundation is essential, drawing from both literary and psychological disciplines. This study adopts a literary psychology approach, with a specific focus on **Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory** as the primary framework for understanding personality dynamics, internal conflicts, and ego defense mechanisms reflected in the character. Freud, S. (2024a).

### 2.1. Literary Psychology

Literary psychology is an analytical approach in literature that focuses on the psychological dimensions of fictional characters, as well as the connection between the author's mental state and the literary work. According to Suwardi Endraswara (2011:96), literary psychology views literature as a medium that contains various psychological phenomena, which can be explored to understand the inner experiences of both characters and authors. This approach seeks to uncover emotional conflicts, trauma, and mental processes that shape characters' behaviors and identities within the narrative.

### 2.2. Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalysis, developed by Sigmund Freud, is a theory and method for analyzing personality that emphasizes the role of the **unconscious mind** in influencing human behavior. Freud divided the structure of personality into three main components:

- a. **Id**: The instinctual and unconscious part of the personality, driven by primitive desires and impulses. The id operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification regardless of reality or morality.
- b. **Ego**: The rational aspect of the psyche that mediates between the id and external reality. Governed by the reality principle, the ego strives to meet the demands of the id in socially acceptable and realistic ways.
- c. **Superego**: The internalized moral standards and ideals acquired from society and parental figures. It functions as a conscience, imposing guilt and guiding behavior in line with moral values.

These three components are in constant tension. When internal conflict arises among them, psychological anxiety and emotional disturbances may occur.

### 2.3. Ego Defense Mechanisms

To manage the tension between the id, ego, and superego, the ego employs various defense mechanisms. Freud identified several common strategies, including:

- a. **Repression:** The unconscious suppression of painful memories or emotions.
- b. **Denial:** Refusing to accept a painful or threatening reality.
- c. **Projection:** Attributing one's own undesirable feelings or conflicts onto others.
- d. **Regression:** Reverting to childlike behaviors in response to stress or trauma.
- e. **Sublimation:** Redirecting unacceptable impulses into socially acceptable activities.

In *Heartbreak Motel*, these defense mechanisms are evident in Ava Alessandra's behavior, which reflects her attempt to cope with emotional wounds from the past.

### 2.4. Trauma Development and Dream Symbolism

Freud also emphasized that unresolved trauma has a lasting impact on the unconscious mind and can manifest through **symbols in dreams**, compulsive behavior, or difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Dreams are viewed as expressions of repressed desires and unresolved conflicts. In Ava's case, recurring dreams such as walking through endless hotel corridors can be interpreted as symbolic representations of her feeling trapped in unresolved emotional pain.

### 2.5. Conclusion of Theoretical Framework

By applying Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the analysis of Ava Alessandra's character reveals how personality structure and defense mechanisms shape her psychological profile and emotional responses. Literary psychology, as an approach, allows researchers to interpret fictional characters as mirrors of real human experiences, particularly those involving trauma, anxiety, and identity formation. This theoretical framework supports an interpretation that goes beyond the surface of the text, offering deep insight into the emotional and psychological complexity of characters in literature.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, focusing on an in-depth reading of *Heartbreak Motel*. Phrases and excerpts indicating signs of trauma were identified and analyzed using Freud's concepts of the id, ego, superego, and ego defense mechanisms. To ensure the validity of the analysis, theoretical triangulation was applied by referencing key perspectives from Indonesian literary psychology scholars, such as Suwardi Endraswara (2011) and Albertine Minderop (2010).

The primary data source for this study is *Heartbreak Motel*, a novel written by Ika Natassa and published in 2023 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The analysis centers on the main character, Ava Alessandra, an actress who struggles with deep psychological conflict stemming from unresolved childhood trauma.

Data collection was conducted through close and critical reading of the novel. The researcher identified and marked excerpts that reflect psychological elements such as internal conflict, anxiety, dreams, and ego defense mechanisms including projection, repression, denial, and regression. These excerpts were then categorized according to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly focusing on the structure of personality (id, ego, and superego) and the operation of defense mechanisms.

The data analysis followed these steps:

- a. Identifying relevant excerpts that indicate psychological symptoms in the protagonist.
- b. Classifying the data based on key concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis.
- c. Interpreting the data to explain how psychological conflict arises and evolves within Ava Alessandra.
- d. Drawing conclusions to address the main research focus—how personality structure and defense mechanisms shape the character's behavior and development throughout the narrative.

To enhance data validity, the study applied theoretical triangulation by referencing the views of literary psychology experts such as Suwardi Endraswara and Albertine Minderop, both of whom have extensively explored the application of psychoanalytic theory in literature. Minderop, A. (2024).

By employing this method, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the interplay between trauma, the unconscious mind, and character development in literary works, as exemplified by the psychological depth of Ava Alessandra.

## 4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1. Data 1: Symptoms of Trauma and Repression of the Past

Ava suffers emotional trauma due to emotional abandonment by her parents and rejection in her early romantic experiences. Although these traumas are repressed, they significantly influence her behavior. Sugihastuti, R., & Suharto. (2024).

“People always leave. That’s the one thing I’ve learned you can count on.” (p. 29)  
“I don’t remember much of my childhood just... shadows and silence.” (p. 41)

These lines indicate suppressed trauma. Ava buries her painful childhood memories in her unconscious, but they resurface as pessimism and detachment in social interactions.

### 4.2. Data 2: Conflict Between Id, Ego, and Superego

Ava longs for affection (**id**) but fears abandonment (**superego**), prompting her **ego** to protect her by avoiding deep relationships. “When someone gets too close, I feel suffocated. Like I need to run.” (p. 58) “Sometimes I want to be touched so badly it hurts, but the moment someone reaches out, I pull away.” (p. 66)

The conflict between Ava’s desire for intimacy and her fear of emotional vulnerability causes anxiety and avoidance, highlighting her ego’s struggle to maintain balance.

### 4.3. Data 3: Projection and Denial in Romantic Relationships

Ava often projects her fears onto her partner and denies having emotional issues. “It’s not that I’m broken. They’re the ones who don’t know how to love.” (p. 79) “I’m not scared. I just don’t care anymore.” (p. 88)

Here, Ava displaces blame onto others and refuses to acknowledge her trauma, despite showing signs of depression and emotional exhaustion.

### 4.4. Data 4: Dream Symbols as Subconscious Manifestations

Ava frequently dreams of an endless hotel corridor, symbolizing her confusion and inability to escape the past. “I walk down the hallway. The doors won’t open. I’m trapped... and it will never end.” (p. 102)

According to Freud, dreams are gateways to the unconscious. The never-ending corridor and locked doors reflect Ava's entrapment in unresolved trauma.

#### 4.5. Data 5: Regression and Emotional Dependency

Ava occasionally exhibits regressive behavior, emotionally reverting to childhood when under stress. "I just want someone to hold me and tell me everything's going to be okay. Like when I was five." (p. 115)

This statement reflects regression an unconscious return to an earlier developmental stage as a defense against present pressures.

#### 4.6. Data 6: A Dominant Superego and Guilt Complex

Ava's excessively strong **superego** causes her to feel guilt even when experiencing moments of happiness. "Every time I smile, I hear a voice inside me saying I don't deserve it." (p. 127)

This irrational guilt stems from internalized moral standards likely instilled during childhood, intensifying Ava's inner conflict. Ratna, N. K. (2024).

### 5. DISCUSSION

The main character of Ika Natassa's *Heartbreak Motel*, Ava Alessandra, represents a deeply wounded individual navigating emotional instability and unresolved trauma. Through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Ava's behavior, thoughts, and emotional responses can be understood as the result of complex interactions between her unconscious desires, internal moral constraints, and her attempts to maintain psychological equilibrium.

#### 5.1. The Influence of Childhood Trauma on Personality Structure

Ava's early experiences, particularly emotional abandonment by her parents and repeated rejections in romantic relationships, leave a profound psychological impact. According to Freud, such unresolved trauma is often repressed into the unconscious, but it continues to influence an individual's behavior. In Ava's case, the repression of her painful past manifests as emotional detachment, chronic anxiety, and mistrust in relationships. Her withdrawn personality and aversion to intimacy are reflections of the conflict between her **id's desire for love and affection, and her superego's fear of vulnerability and rejection.**

#### 5.2. The Internal Conflict Between Id, Ego, and Superego

Throughout the novel, Ava's internal world is dominated by a psychological tug-of-war between her **id, ego, and superego:**

- a. The **id** urges her to seek emotional closeness and romantic connection.
- b. The **superego**, shaped by her past traumas and social norms, imposes guilt, fear, and self-doubt.
- c. The **ego** attempts to mediate between these two forces, but often fails, leading to repeated emotional breakdowns and withdrawal.

This inner conflict results in inconsistent behavior—longing for affection while simultaneously pushing people away. For instance, she admits wanting to be touched but recoils when someone gets emotionally close, showing the dominance of her defensive superego over her suppressed desires.

#### 5.3. Ego Defense Mechanisms

Freud's theory also helps to decode Ava's psychological defenses, which serve as coping mechanisms for her unresolved pain. Several defense mechanisms are evident in her character:

- a. **Denial:** Ava often refuses to acknowledge that she is emotionally damaged, insisting that she simply does not care.
- b. **Projection:** She blames others especially her romantic partners—for emotional failures, avoiding responsibility for her own fears.
- c. **Repression:** Painful memories from childhood are pushed out of conscious awareness, yet influence her dreams and behavior.
- d. **Regression:** In moments of vulnerability, Ava reverts to childlike needs, seeking comfort and reassurance.

These mechanisms allow Ava to temporarily protect herself from emotional distress but also hinder her ability to form meaningful relationships.

#### 5.4. Symbolic Dreams as Expressions of the Unconscious

Ava's recurring dreams of endless hotel corridors and locked doors are symbolic manifestations of her unconscious mind. Freud believed that dreams are the "royal road to the unconscious," where repressed fears, desires, and conflicts surface in disguised forms. The corridor symbolizes Ava's emotional stagnation her inability to move beyond her past while the locked doors represent blocked access to healing and trust. These dream sequences serve as narrative devices that reveal Ava's deeper psychological struggles more clearly than her conscious thoughts or spoken words. Natassa, I. (2023).

#### 5.5. Ava's Emotional Ambivalence and Moral Dilemma

Ava's behavior throughout the novel reflects emotional ambivalence. She desires connection but fears the consequences of vulnerability. Her superego constantly judges her attempts at happiness, resulting in guilt even when she experiences fleeting joy. This leads to moral dilemmas whether she deserves love, whether she should pursue it, or whether it will only bring more pain. Freud's view that the superego internalizes strict moral standards helps explain Ava's self-critical nature and tendency to sabotage her own happiness. Minderop, A. (2024).

#### 5.6. Literary Implications and Real-Life Reflection

The portrayal of Ava Alessandra goes beyond fiction; it reflects real psychological dynamics found in people dealing with trauma. Ika Natassa's nuanced construction of Ava provides a psychological depth rarely seen in contemporary romance literature. Readers are invited not only to empathize with Ava, but also to recognize patterns of emotional repression, fear, and resilience in themselves or those around them. From a literary psychological perspective, *Heartbreak Motel* is a compelling case of how fiction can illuminate the inner life of characters and deepen our understanding of human suffering and healing. Endraswara, S. (2024).

#### 5.7. Summary of Findings

Ava Alessandra is not merely a fictional protagonist she is a psychological portrait of someone coping with emotional damage using unconscious defense mechanisms. Her journey through pain, fear, denial, and gradual self-awareness reflects Freud's core psychoanalytic principles. The novel demonstrates how deeply the unconscious mind can shape behavior and how literature can serve as a mirror to explore the complex depths of the human psyche. Tyson, L. (2024).

## 6. CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

### 6.1. Conclusion

The character Ava Alessandra in *Heartbreak Motel* experiences a range of complex psychological traumas that can be effectively analyzed through a Freudian psychoanalytic lens. Repressed childhood trauma manifests as inner conflict between the id, ego, and superego. Ava exhibits several ego defense mechanisms, including projection, denial, regression, and repression. Additionally, she frequently experiences symbolic dreams that reflect the tensions of her unconscious mind.

These deep psychological struggles help explain her tendency to withdraw from love and suppress emotional vulnerability. Through the lens of literary psychology, readers are reminded that trauma is not merely a physical wound but also a profound internal scar that shapes a character's behavior and identity throughout a narrative. This analysis highlights literature's powerful role in uncovering and examining the deepest layers of the human psyche.

### 6.2. Suggestions

Based on the analysis of the main character Ava Alessandra in Ika Natassa's *Heartbreak Motel*, several suggestions can be offered for future readers, researchers, and literary creators:

- a. For Readers: Readers are encouraged to approach the character of Ava Alessandra not merely as a fictional figure, but as a representation of real psychological experiences. Understanding her internal struggles through the lens of psychoanalysis may enhance empathy and awareness of how trauma can affect human behavior and emotional responses.
- b. For Future Researchers: Future researchers may expand the scope of analysis by comparing Ava's character with other literary figures who also suffer from emotional trauma. A comparative psychoanalytic study would provide deeper insight into recurring psychological themes in contemporary literature, especially in Indonesian women's narratives.
- c. For Literature and Psychology Scholars: Scholars in literary and psychological fields are encouraged to explore more interdisciplinary research. Combining literary analysis with psychological theory, such as Freud's psychoanalysis, can open new perspectives in understanding character development, trauma, and healing in fiction.
- d. For Authors and Novelists: Writers are invited to continue creating characters with psychological complexity, as seen in Ava Alessandra. Such characters not only enrich the narrative but also serve as mirrors of human experience, making literature a powerful tool for reflection and emotional exploration.
- e. For Educators: Educators and literature instructors may use *Heartbreak Motel* as a reference in teaching literary psychology, as it provides a concrete example of how fictional narratives intersect with psychological theory. The novel can serve as a medium for students to learn about trauma, defense mechanisms, and character analysis.

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