



“Beauty, Blood, and Boundaries: Interrogating Genre and Morality in ‘Haunting Adeline’ Novel written by H.D. Carlton Using Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory”

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Received: 11/02/2026 Revised: 15/03/2026 Accepted: 07/04/2026

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This Literature Research will analyze the themes of beauty, violence, and moral tension in H. D. Carlton's novel *Haunting Adeline* using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

Methodology – By focusing on key Freudian concepts such as the id, ego, superego, repression, and the life–death drives, this study examines how the novel portrays desire and boundary-breaking behavior within the dark romance genre.

Findings – Through close reading, the analysis shows how the characters' actions reflect unconscious impulses that challenge traditional ideas of morality, consent, and emotional control.

Novelty – The results suggest that the novel's blend of attraction and danger creates a space where psychological conflict becomes central to the reader's experience.

Significance – Overall, this study argues that *Haunting Adeline* not only pushes the limits of romantic storytelling but also highlights how human behavior is shaped by complex inner forces, making it a meaningful text for understanding the relationship between genre, morality, and the unconscious mind.

Keywords: Dark romance; Genre analysis; Morality; Obsession; Psychological interpretation.

How to cite: Raditiyanto, S., Amina, & Purwadi. (2026). Beauty, Blood, and Boundaries: Interrogating Genre and Morality in ‘Haunting Adeline’ Novel written by H.D. Carlton Using Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory. *Journal of Literature Language and Academic Studies*, 05(2), pp, 52-59, doi: <https://doi.org/10.56855/jllans.v5i2.1869>



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1. Introduction

Literature has long served as a way to understand human emotions, moral values, and the hidden motivations that shape people's actions. In English literature, readers often encounter

stories that explore complex relationships and challenge the boundaries of what is considered acceptable or ethical. Over the past few years, dark romance has become one of the most discussed contemporary genres because it presents love in tension with fear, desire mixed with danger, and affection that exists alongside violence or obsession. These narratives prompt readers to consider why certain relationships feel compelling even when they break social rules or moral expectations. Based on our studies, we chose to use Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which examines the 3 main components of human personality: id, superego, and ego (Endrawati, 2022).

H. D. Carlton's *Haunting Adeline* stands out as a central example of this trend. The novel is known for its intense atmosphere, disturbing tension, and the unstable dynamic between its main characters. The story combines Gothic elements, emotional vulnerability, and psychological manipulation, creating a world where beauty and cruelty coexist. As the novel crosses the boundaries of consent, control, and obsession, it raises important questions about how readers interpret romantic behavior and why some transgressive relationships still attract interest. Because of these elements, *Haunting Adeline* provides a strong foundation for academic analysis.

To understand these issues more deeply, this study draws on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which focuses on the unconscious mind, hidden desires, and the internal conflicts that shape human behavior. Freud's ideas about the id, ego, and Superego offer a clear structure for examining the characters' motivations, while his concepts of repression and the life–death drives help explain the tension between desire and danger in the novel. By applying psychoanalysis to *Haunting Adeline*, this article aims to investigate how the story represents human impulses, moral boundaries, and psychological conflict. Sigmund Freud's theory of the Id, Ego, and Superego is an example of a personality theory of human psychology. This theory explains how personality develops and what underlies the ability of humans to have new thoughts. Freud revealed that every individual human being must have an id, an innate desire embedded since birth (Giordano, 2020).

Ultimately, this study explores how the novel challenges traditional views of romance, how it uses dark themes to disrupt stable moral judgments, and how Freud's theory helps reveal the deeper psychological forces at work within the characters. Through this combination of literature and psychoanalysis, the article seeks to show why *Haunting Adeline* continues to provoke discussion and what it reveals about the complexities of desire within modern fiction.

2. Methods

This Research uses a qualitative approach grounded in psychoanalytic literary criticism. The qualitative method aims to explain analysis results through descriptions. This descriptive form is in the form of phrases or sentences (Lestari, 2019). The study focuses on how *Haunting Adeline* presents themes of desire, violence, obsession, and moral conflict through its plot and narrative structure. Instead of analyzing a single character in isolation, this methodology examines the novel's overall storyline, major events, and recurring patterns that shape its emotional and psychological atmosphere. The goal is to understand how Freud's psychoanalytic concepts help explain the deeper meanings behind the novel's events and the moral challenges they raise. In qualitative methods, researchers use 2 data sources: primary and secondary data. The primary data used is the original object to be studied. Secondary data are supporting or introductory data that help researchers analyze more easily, such as articles, theory books, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs (Lestari, 2019).

2.1. Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism Framework

The core framework of this study is psychoanalytic literary criticism, which interprets literature by exploring hidden motives, unconscious desires, and psychological tensions. Sigmund Freud's theories offer tools for understanding how stories reflect inner conflicts within the human mind. Concepts such as the id, ego, and superego, as well as repression, compulsion, and the life–death drives, guide the analysis of *Haunting Adeline*. By applying these ideas to the plot, the study examines how the narrative conveys instinctive impulses, moral struggles, and the tension between desire and danger. This framework allows us to examine the novel not only as a romantic story but also as a psychological text.

2.2. Integration of Freudian Concepts

To support the analysis, several key Freudian concepts are integrated directly into the reading of the novel:

- a. Id, Ego, and Superego: Used to interpret how the story presents conflict between instinct, rational control, and moral expectations.
- b. Repression: Helps explain repeated emotional patterns and the return of suppressed feelings within the plot.
- c. Repetition Compulsion: Illuminates the cycles of obsession, pursuit, and danger that shape the storyline.
- d. Eros and Thanatos: Clarifies how the novel combines beauty and attraction with violence and destruction, creating a constantly shifting emotional tone.

By connecting these concepts to plot developments, the study aims to show how the novel reflects the psychological structure Freud describes in his theory of the human mind.

2.3. Textual Analysis

A detailed textual analysis is the main method used in this Research. The process includes a careful reading of the novel, paying attention to specific scenes, turning points, and narrative choices that reveal psychological or moral complexity. Plot elements such as conflicts, acts of violence, moments of desire, and shifts in power dynamics are examined to understand their deeper significance. The analysis also considers literary devices such as symbolism, imagery, and atmosphere to explore how they reinforce the novel's darker themes. This close reading allows the study to trace how the plot expresses unconscious forces and emotional struggles.

2.4. Comparative Analysis

To strengthen the interpretation, the methodology also includes a comparative analysis with other works in the dark romance and gothic romance genres. Comparing *Haunting Adeline* with similar texts helps clarify how the novel fits into, expands, or challenges genre conventions. This comparison provides context for understanding the novel's use of taboo themes, its portrayal of obsession, and its blending of beauty with violence. By situating the novel within a larger literary landscape, the analysis becomes more comprehensive and informed.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Because *Haunting Adeline* deals with sensitive topics such as violence, manipulation, and psychological distress, ethical considerations are essential. The study approaches the novel with care and avoids romanticizing harmful behavior. Instead, the analysis focuses on literary meaning, symbolic function, and psychological interpretation. The methodology acknowledges the difference between fiction and real-world ethics, recognizing that the novel's extreme themes serve narrative and emotional purposes within its genre. The Research also respects the boundaries of academic discussion by presenting the material objectively and responsibly.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Analysis of the Plot in *Haunting Adeline*

a. *Desire, Instinct, and Unconscious*

The plot of *Haunting Adeline* strongly reflects the workings of the unconscious mind, especially the conflict between instinctual desire and moral restraint. Many of the novel's key events—such as the pursuit, moments of obsession, and blurred lines of consent—align with Freud's concept of the id, which seeks satisfaction without regard for consequences. The storyline repeatedly shows desire taking control over logic or social expectations. This finding strengthens the argument that the novel's plot represents unconscious drives influencing behavior, a core idea in psychoanalytic theory.

b. *The Consequences of Obsession and Compulsion*

A major result of the textual analysis is the presence of a repetition compulsion, evident in recurring cycles of pursuit, danger, and emotional intensity. The plot returns again and again to moments where boundaries are crossed, suggesting that the narrative is shaped by unresolved psychological tension. These repeated patterns support Freud's claim that suppressed emotions often return in destructive or obsessive ways. The novel's events show how desire, when not controlled by the ego or superego, leads to emotional conflict and moral disturbance. This finding highlights how the storyline uses obsession to explore the darker side of human psychology.

c. *The Duality of Attraction and Fear*

A recurring theme in the plot is the constant shift between attraction and fear. This duality reflects Freud's life drive (Eros) and death drive (Thanatos), which often work against each other. Beautiful, romantic scenes are immediately followed by violent or threatening ones, showing how the plot is built on the tension between pleasure and destruction (Chapter 29). This dual structure becomes essential for understanding why the novel feels unsettling yet compelling. The analysis reveals that the narrative intentionally uses this duality to explore the emotional limits of intimacy, danger, and desire.

3.1.2. Examination of the Narrative Structure

a. *Breaking Moral Expectations*

The narrative structure of *Haunting Adeline* frequently disrupts traditional moral expectations. Rather than following a safe or predictable romantic storyline, the plot challenges readers to confront actions that fall outside socially accepted norms. This aligns with Freud's idea that literature can reveal the suppressed instincts people are not comfortable acknowledging openly. The unpredictable structure of the story adds to this effect, showing how moral boundaries can become unstable when influenced by powerful unconscious desires.

b. *Power, Control, and Vulnerability*

Another significant finding is the complex power dynamics presented throughout the plot. Scenes involving control, vulnerability, and emotional tension illustrate how the ego and superego struggle to regulate instinctual impulses. These shifting power dynamics also relate to Freud's views on dominance and submission as expressions of deeper psychological needs. By examining the structure of key plot events, the study identifies how the narrative uses these dynamics to explore the limits of autonomy, consent, and emotional dependence.

c. *Symbolism and Psychological Atmosphere*

Symbols such as darkness, confinement, mirrors, and surveillance recur throughout the story, contributing to its psychological depth. These symbols represent the unconscious, the hidden self, and emotional entrapment. The atmosphere of fear mixed with attraction reflects the internal conflicts described in psychoanalytic theory. This finding shows how the novel uses symbolism not only to build tension but also to express the deeper psychological themes that shape the entire plot.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Adeline's Repression and Conflict

Adeline is a character full of contradictions. On the one hand, she is scared—scared of Zade's intense, sometimes controlling behavior. On the other hand, she feels strangely drawn to him, almost as if she cannot help but be pulled into his world. This push and pull reflects Freud's idea of repression, where someone hides or pushes away feelings they do not want to face. Adeline does not fully admit to herself how much she is attracted to danger and control, so these feelings stay hidden in her unconscious mind. This can be seen in the prologue of the story, where we get a POV from Adeline herself:

"Fear.

And excitement.

I don't know why it excites me.

Something must be wrong with me." (Carlton, 2021: 13)

Because of this repression, Adeline experiences confusion and internal conflict. She wants safety and freedom, but a secret part of her craves the excitement and power Zade represents. Freud believed that repressed desires do not just disappear; they influence how a person acts, sometimes causing anxiety or strange behavior. In the novel, this explains why Adeline sometimes acts unpredictably—she is caught between what she consciously wants and what her unconscious desires pull her toward. This creates a complex, layered character who shows how trauma and desire can become intertwined within a person. As Adeline speaks to herself in a chapter of the book:

"This is wrong. So wrong.

I shouldn't be attracted to a stalker. I'm so, so scared.

But yet, so... consumed by him." (Carlton, 2021: 163)

3.2.2. Zade as the Embodiment of the Id

Zade is the perfect example of Freud's id—he acts on raw impulses, desires, and emotions without thinking about rules or consequences. He is obsessed with control, and this obsession drives most of his actions. The id wants immediate pleasure and satisfaction, and Zade's behavior shows this clearly: he is possessive, intense, and often dangerous. We can see it in the second chapter of the book, where Zade is introduced to the readers:

"Because I'm obsessed. I'm addicted.

No matter. She won't be able to escape me now.

*I've just found myself a little mouse, and I won't stop until
I've*

trapped her." (Carlton, 2021: 26)

From a Freudian perspective, Zade's controlling nature can also be seen as a way to handle his own inner chaos. The id is wild and untamed, and sometimes people like Zade try

to control others because they cannot control themselves. His desire to dominate Adeline is not just about her—it is about managing his own powerful, chaotic urges. This makes him both fascinating and frightening, embodying the darker side of human desire. In gothic fiction, characters like Zade represent the dangerous, uncontrollable forces within us all, making the story both exciting and unsettling. It is visible to the readers when he describes how he felt about Adeline and the power he has over her:

"It's not something I can explain. When I saw her, I fucking nearly fell to my knees with need, and I will have her. (Carlton, 2021: 210)

"But not because I'm psychotic and delusional. I'm not going to make a goddamn shrine of her and convince myself that we were destined to be together by the gods or whatever weird shit people believe in these days."

I'll have her because she's the first thing that made me feel something good in so long, and I've become obsessed with keeping it." (Carlton, 2021: 212)

3.2.3. Consent and the Fantasy of Control

One of the most interesting parts of *Haunting Adeline* is how it plays with the idea of control and consent. The novel blurs the line between what is romantic and what is frightening, showing how closely desire and danger can be linked. This tension creates a kind of psychological "safe space" where readers can explore difficult feelings like obsession and taboo desires without real harm.

From a Freudian point of view, this fantasy of control reflects the mind's struggle to balance the id's wild urges with the ego and superego's attempts to maintain moral and reasonable standards. The ego tries to manage these powerful desires in ways that do not break the rules, but sometimes the fantasy lets people imagine a world in which the id's impulses are allowed to run free in a controlled way. *Haunting Adeline* uses Gothic and dark romance themes to explore this delicate balance, challenging readers to consider how desire, power, and morality interact. It shows that love and control are not always clear-cut, and sometimes they can be messy, confusing, and even dangerous.

The analysis of *Haunting Adeline* using Freud's psychoanalytic theory reveals meaningful insights into the novel's treatment of desire, morality, and psychological conflict. The plot's recurring patterns of obsession, attraction, control, and fear demonstrate the influence of unconscious drives, especially the tension between instinct and restraint. These findings show how the novel uses its storyline to explore human impulses in ways that challenge traditional ideas about romance and ethical boundaries. The examination of the narrative structure further highlights the novel's focus on psychological struggle. By intertwining desire with danger and intimacy with violence, the plot reflects the complexity of human emotions as Freud described them. The comparative analysis with other dark romance works shows that while the genre often includes themes of obsession and taboo relationships, *Haunting Adeline* intensifies these elements to create a more direct psychological confrontation.

Overall, the findings position the novel as a text that pushes the boundaries of the romance genre while offering a deeper look into the unconscious mind. The study contributes to ongoing discussions of morality in contemporary fiction and demonstrates how psychoanalytic theory can enrich the understanding of narratives that address extreme emotional and psychological experiences.

4. Conclusions

This study shows that *Haunting Adeline* uses its plot and narrative structure to reveal the deep Influence of unconscious desires, instinctual drives, and emotional conflicts. By applying Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the analysis demonstrates that the novel is shaped by forces such as desire, obsession, fear, and the constant struggle between impulse and restraint. The repeated cycles of pursuit, control, and emotional tension highlight how the characters' actions are driven by unresolved inner conflicts rather than rational decision-making.

The narrative's shifts between attraction and danger, pleasure and violence further illustrate Freud's concepts of the life and death drives, showing how these opposing instincts coexist in human behaviour. Symbolism and atmosphere strengthen this psychological focus, creating a story that reflects the instability of the unconscious mind.

Overall, the findings suggest that *Haunting Adeline* functions as more than a dark romance; it becomes a psychological narrative that exposes the complexity of human instinct and moral boundaries. Through Freud's framework, the novel can be understood as a portrayal of hidden desires and internal struggles that push characters beyond social norms. This conclusion shows that psychoanalysis offers a meaningful and effective lens for interpreting the novel's themes, structure, and emotional intensity.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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