



## Exploring the Id in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)

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### Abstract

This research paper focuses on exploring the id in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). From Freudian prospective, id, ego and superego are three parts of human psyche or mind. The id or pleasure principle is dominant throughout the novel. The instinctive and impulsive urges of the id ruin the ego and superego of the characters. As the characters strive to forget the traumatic past of the war, they indulge in excessive pleasure as free sex and excessive alcoholism. The deep trauma of war rooted in the unconscious of the characters, makes their lives like a hell. Consequently, the id strives for gratification and pleasure for removing the trauma from their minds. Brett, who is the heroine of the novel, falls to the urges of the id blindly. She recklessly indulges in free sex and excessive drinking. Similarly, Jake, Mike, Bill and Count always seek excessive pleasure in drinking. The characters search for pleasure is the unconscious urge for life instinct and psychic energy. The dominant id suppresses ego and superego as a result it creates neurotic anxieties in the characters.

**Keywords:** Id, ego, superego, neurotic anxieties

### 1. Introduction

"You can't always get what you consciously want, but you get what you unconsciously need" (Tyson, 2006, p. 12).

Psychoanalytic criticism can be aptly used for the interpretation and analysis of a literary work. The literary work reflects the dreams or unconscious of the writers. Dreams preserve infantile and some fundamental impulses, wishes, desires and urges repressed by some social restraints in the unconscious. From Freudian prospective, dreams comprise of manifest and latent layers; the former is our real dream recurring in a form of images or symbols. The latent is the deeper and unconscious level and an object of analysis. The repressed wishes are fulfilled in dreams when they move from the latent level to the manifest level and find an outlet through abstract images and symbols. Similarly, like dreams, artists have their own realm of some repressed desires, urges and ideas in their unconscious. The writers express their unconscious in literary works and provide an outlet to their restrained urges or desires. The psychoanalytic analysis can aptly interpret the literary text, which reflects the unconscious or dreams of the writer.

The id, ego and superego constitute a major personality theory of Freud; these three layers of human psyche represent instinctive, rational and moral levels of human personality. Id is the innate part of human psyche, which creates pleasure principle or Eros and it seeks immediate gratification



of all needs, wishes and urges. Freud (1949) says that id develops in the unconscious and it is the store of innate and instinctive urges. The id is blind to values, morality, religion and tradition. The ego develops in the conscious level and it operates on reality principle and rationality. It mediates between id and superego and fulfills their demands. . Freud (1949) states that ego is conscious and acts upon the reality principle. The ego regulates and balances different urges, resolves the conflict and achieves relief. It develops defense mechanism for controlling the urges of the id and superego. The superego imposes moral authority and represents traditional, social and religious values. According to Freud (1949), the superego restrains the urges of the id and presents the influence of parents, teachers and role models. The superego controls the aggression of the id and forbids sex, obscenity and amorality. It restricts the impulsive demands of id, which are unacceptable in the society.

The researcher uses psychoanalytic tool of id, ego and superego for the interpretation and analysis of the personalities of characters in the novel. The id is dominant throughout the novel and its impulsive urges suppress the ego and superego. When dominant id suppresses ego and superego, it creates neurotic anxieties in human personality. The researcher has thoroughly analyzed and explored the three levels of the characters' personalities and their neurotic anxieties.

## **2. Dominance of Id in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)**

Freud's theories were very popular in the early twentieth century and during the publication of *The Sun Rises* (1926). Therefore, his concepts influenced the literary works and general folks. In the aftermath of the war, new values and trends emerged which ruined Victorian ideals and traditional concepts. One major reason of such liberal and amorous trends was obviously the impact of Freudian concepts. Fishbein (1986) says that psychoanalysis produced some valuable changes for the victims of the war as it mocked at Victorian ideals and sought new ways of social conducts. In the aftermath of the war, a group of young war affected people called the Lost Generation emerged. The characters in the novel are the members of the Lost Generation. They strive to forget the traumatic past; therefore, they leave their own lands and move from one place to another. The characters blindly fall to the urges of the untamed id; therefore, they indulge in free sex and excessive alcoholism. In his book *The Generation of 1914*, Wohl (1979) states that the expatriates indulge in debauchery and they spend most of their time in drinking and other pleasures. They sleep with each other women and do not give birth to children. In the aftermath of the war, the expatriates indulge in aimless and reckless tendencies.

### **2.1. The dominant Id of Brett Ashley**

Brett Ashley, who is the heroin of the novel, is in the complete hold of wild id. She represents the New Woman of early twentieth century who challenged the Victorian and dominant role of man. The dominant and liberal role of the New Woman was the result of Freudian concepts. Fitzgerald (1931) illustrates, "One of its former glories, the less sought-after girls who had become resigned to sublimating a probable celibacy, came across Freud and Jung in seeking their intellectual recompense and came tearing back into the fray" (p.5). Brett like the New Woman indulges in



parties, drinking and sex freely. She is the most powerful and influential character in the novel. She acts independently and follows her free will; her sole aim is to eat, drink and be merry. Fishbein (1986) states, that the main factor that contributed to new and liberal manners of women was the influence of Freudian theories. The ideas of Freud produced rapid effects on sexuality and role of sex on a social level. Brett's actions and behavior are new; she adapts herself to the modern tendencies of the post war age. She merely searches for the satisfaction of her instinctual and impulsive demands of the id.

The defense mechanism of Brett's ego like sublimation and repression cannot control the urges of the id; her powerful libido and Eros triumph over her ego. Sublimation transforms impulsive desires of id into socially acceptable way. Repression pushes back unacceptable urges of id into unconscious and they cannot pester us consciously. Brett is helpless to sublimate or repress the instinctual urges of her dominant id. The id of Brett strives for psychic energy and pleasure for removing the trauma of war from her mind. Like other victims of the war, the trauma of war has deeply rooted in her unconscious. Consequently, her id strives for relief and pleasure; she indulges in lavish parties, excessive drinking and free sex. Rudnick (1995) States, "Brett represents Hemingway idealized rendering of the woman free of sexual repression" (p.70). It is difficult for her to suppress her biological needs and sexual desires, and it is her wild id, which indulges her in excessive and rash sexual acts. She is always obsessed with wild sexual urges; she strives to satisfy her sensual needs. Rudnick (1995) says, "Brett represents the principle of female Eros" (p.70). The psychic energy and libido of Brett's id have developed a powerful Eros; therefore, she acts blindly to satisfy her erotic desires.

According to Freud (1964), the relation of ego and id is like a rider and horse. The horse provides the power of motion and ego directs the motion of horse. After the analysis of the unconscious of Brett, it is explored that her id is without the control of the rider. She has experienced a severe trauma of war; her first fiancé has died of dysentery in the trenches of war. Moreover, she has worked as a nurse in the war and she has seen a number of injured and dead soldiers. Therefore, she constantly searches for pleasure so that the trauma of war can be removed from her mind. Brett spends aimless and careless life while searching for psychic energy and excessive pleasure. Willingham (2002) states that for a quite long time a number of critics have regarded her destructive bitch, promiscuous and amoral woman who badly affects men and weakens them. She is destructive force for men and a major cause of disagreement among male characters in the novel. Similarly, Wilson (1941) calls her "an exclusive destructive force" (p. 328). She has become destructive in search of excessive pleasure and wild sex. She crosses all limits and acts blindly for the satisfaction of her sexual desires. Her own fiancé, Mike, calls her "an extra ordinary wench" (p.143). Consequently, she abuses and harms many men in this quest.

The untamed id of Brett ruins her ego completely when she develops multiples relation with men, and sleeps with them without any reluctance. She is waiting for her divorce; Mike is her fiancé, and she loves Jake madly. Similarly, she sleeps with Cohn, pets with Count, and finally she falls



in love with a young Spanish bullfighter, Pedro Romero. Yu (2010) states, that Brett remains dominant throughout the novel. She chooses men of her own choice for sexual relations; she makes relations with different men and then compels them to break the relations.

Aldridge (1950) is of the view that she is a compulsive bitch. Sex has become her mania and compulsion. She loves Jake madly, but drinks and enjoys with Count; she also sleeps with Cohn. Finally, when she falls in Romero love, she becomes a compulsive bitch, and her id subdues her ego completely. She knows that Jake loves her madly, but she tells him instantly after falling in love with Romero. One sensible and rational person does not disclose new love or infatuation to their lovers. She tells Jake “I’m a goner. I’m mad about the Romero boy. I’m in love with him, I think...I can’t help it. I’m goner. It’s tearing me all up inside”. (Hemingway, 2004, p.159). Jake is helpless, and he listens to Brett patiently. Her untamed id torments him and hits his superego throughout the novel. The sexual urges of the wild id of Brett are clearly exposed in her conversation with Jake.

When ego defense mechanism is weak, it becomes the center of the conflict created by these three levels of human mind or psyche. This conflict leads to anxiety and neurosis. The dominant ego creates external or realistic anxieties; the dominant superego creates moral anxieties and when id suppresses both ego and superego, it leads to neurotic anxieties in human personality. Freud (1964) explains this important function of ego,

The ego, driven by the id, confined by the superego, repulsed by reality, struggles to master its economic task of bringing about harmony among the forces and influences working in and upon it...If the ego is obliged to admit its weakness, it breaks out in anxiety- realistic anxiety regarding the external world, moral anxiety regarding the superego and neurotic anxiety regarding the strength of the passions in the id (110-111).

Brett defense mechanism is obviously weak; her ego cannot sublimate or repress her impulsive urges. She knows that Jake loves her passionately; therefore, it is not rational approach to be such fickle and wavering in the presence of her lover but she still torments Jake with her aggressive advances. When Jake asks her to stop longing for Romero, she replies, “I cannot help it. I have never been able to help anything” (p. 195). When Jake feels upset and asks her to stop it, she replies, “How can I stop it? I can’t stop things. Feel that?” (p.159). She feels utterly frustrated and she is trembling while talking to Jake. She is impatient in the absence of Romero; she tells Jake, “I have got to do something I really want to do something. I have lost my self-respect” (p.159). She also ignores the fact that if a woman is even extremely promiscuous, the world does not appreciate her for becoming such bitch in the presence of her lover. Brett is extremely under the effect of neurotic anxieties as her id has suppressed the ego and superego.

In addition, Brett’s id persuades her true lover, Jake, to help her in finding Romero. At this stage, she is blind, and her id has destroyed her ego. In reality, everybody will condemn and abhor such act of woman or man if they use their own lovers to make new and multiple relations. Jake helps



her and arranges her dates and sleeping with Romero. As he facilitates Brett in this way, Cohn taunts him and calls him, “damned pimp” (p. 165). Finally, in search of Romero, Brett’s id overwhelms her ego completely; her remarks show the power of her wild id. “God knows, I have never felt such bitch...I have always done just what I wanted” (Hemingway, 2004, p.160). Jake is helpless and listens to her. Her remarks prick him and shatter his superego. She says again, “I do feel such a bitch...my God! The things a woman goes through...I do feel such a bitch” (p.160). Here, the instinctual and impulsive needs of her unconscious have ruined her conscious. She cannot repress or sublimate her impulsive sexual urges. Fielder (1975) is of the view that Brett is the most exceptional among Hemingway’s bitch women. Such promiscuous urges of Brett have made Jake life like a hell; he goes through severe anxieties and frustrations.

The desire of Brett for free sex, excessive drinking and aimless wandering ruins also her superego. Brett is rebellious against social, traditional and religious values. She is irreligious, and she does not follow the old values of Christianity. Brett does not observe religious or spiritual practices; she spends reckless and hasty life. Rani (2014) comments on the irreligious approach of Brett “She takes leave from the institutionalized religion and traditional concept of God” (p. 967). When she goes to Church with Jake, she feels much nervous and bored there. She wants to come out instantly; her remarks to Jake expose her irreligious approach. “Let’s get out of here.

Makes me damned nervous” (p.160). She is not relaxed in Church, and she wants to leave it instantly. She says to Jake, “Don’t know why I get so nervy in Church. Never does me any good...I’m damned bad in the religious atmosphere. I have the wrong type of face” (p.181). Her remarks show that she has lost her religious and spiritual zeal. It is obvious that her superego no longer performs its basic and effective function. Her rebellious acts and wild desires have subdued her superego completely.

## **2.2. The Id of Jake Barnes**

Jake Barnes is the hero of the novel, and he is the most complex character among the expatriates. He has received both physical and psychic trauma in the brutal experience of war. The wound of war has rendered him a complex personality; it is difficult to analyze his character from psychoanalytical prospective. The wound is a baffling one because he has lost his penis in the war but his testicle is safe and functional; therefore, he has not lost his warmth completely. The power of his id and libido in the unconscious is intact but he cannot copulate. Freud compares the relationship between the structure of personality and the level of consciousness to an iceberg floating on water. One-third part of the iceberg, which is visible, represents the conscious level; the invisible part of iceberg is unconscious level and it largely controls the visible part. The invisible unconscious of Jake is active; therefore, he still feels warmth and sensuality for Brett. He loves to get closer to her and desperately wants to kiss her. When Brett does not like it and draws back, he asks her, “Isn’t there anything we can do about it?”(p.22). He does not get proper response and reaction from Brett. She is confused and lost in her thoughts.





He still asks her, “And there’s not a damn thing we could do?” (p.23). He wants to have Brett in his company as it gives him pleasure and satisfaction. The neurotic anxieties of Jake’s id are very complex and painful due to his mysterious wound.

Jake might have left Brett if his testicles were also dysfunctional like his penis. His functional testicles have preserved the power of his id; therefore, he stays with Brett for restoring psychic energy. Brett’s promiscuity troubles him extremely; however, he cannot leave her alone. Baskett (1978) adds that Brett keeps frustrating him; however, he cannot live away from her. He wants to get closer to her whenever they are together. His constant stay with Brett makes him stable and tough character and he faces all the troubles willingly. Brett likes and prefers him among all the characters due to his sincere and altruist nature. Although he knows that he will suffer whenever he lives with Brett, yet he is unable to live without her. He narrates his difficult situation during dancing to the tune, “I had the feeling of a nightmare of it all being repeated, something I had been through and that now I must go through again” (p.56). Here it is obvious that he accepts all troubles and anxieties for gaining psychic energy of Eros. He is well aware that his impotence frustrates and pricks Brett; however, he is not ready to desert her.

The psychoanalytic analysis of Jake character is not simple like other characters of the novel. The functional state of his testicles reveals the true power of his id. His mysterious wound arise a serious question about the urge of his id. When he feels warmth for Brett without penis, how much his id will be powerful and dominant if he is sexually healthy? This is a question, which puzzles many reader and critics. Astre (1959) is of the view that Hemingway’s hero was able to produce all feelings of a man, but he could not exercise such feelings. The power of his id is intact; however, he has lost the instrument, which functions the instinctual drives of the id. He is caught in severe dilemma, and he cannot leave Brett nor can he satisfy her. Similarly, Schmigalle (2005) adds that the genital wound of Jake has occurred in such manner that his sexual desire is functional, but he is unable to have an intercourse. Here, it is obvious that the id of Jake is not weak, but he is helpless due to his mysterious and complex wound. He might have independently indulged in sexual activities if his penis had not been lost in the war.

### **2.3. The Untamed Id of the expatriates**

Hemingway’s other characters are also in the hold of id; therefore, they are suffering from extreme neurotic anxieties. The major characters are heavy drinkers in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). Brett, Jake, Mike, Bill and Count drink excessively. The obsessive urge for drinking is the effect of the powerful id, which seeks immediate gratification of all needs. The trauma of war has snatched their happiness. As a result, their id becomes dominant which needs pleasure and gratification for removing the trauma of war from their unconscious. Gelderman states, in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), most of the time the characters are talking about drinking. They are suffering from pains and depression because of excessive drinking. The characters in the novel mainly focus on drinking in their conversation. Food and drinking are natural and basic needs of human body, but the impulsive desire for extra food and drinking is the result of the untamed and dominant id. Hemingway’s characters in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) are epicures, and they always seek pleasure



in drinking and food. Wyatt (1999) states, “Food and drink are the most reliable pleasure in Hemingway” (p.598). The unconscious demands of the pleasure principle are compulsive, and drinking has become the need of Hemingway’s characters. The love and desire for wine are rooted in their unconscious, which has become a sort of permanent need, and they cannot control these wild urges.

The expatriates are compulsive epicures and they fall victims to hedonism. The novel is replete with reckless remarks of the different characters. Like Hemingway, his characters have alcoholic dependency in his novels. After the fiesta, when Jake returns to alcohol, his remarks show that wine gives him a great company in isolation, “I drank a bottle of wine for a company. It was a Chateau Margaux. It was pleasant to be drinking slowly and to be tasting the wine and to be drinking alone. A bottle of wine was a good company” (Hemingway, 2004, p.204). The remarks of Jake reveal his unconscious desire for pleasure and utter dependence on alcohol. He is also alienated and isolated in the crowded world. He has many friends and a lover like Brett, but he still feels aloof and isolated. He likes to drink alone, and he does not want his friends to disturb him after the fiesta. His deep inclination for wine is the stimulus of the id, which unconsciously indulges him in compulsive drinking. Drinking is normal, but such abnormal urge for drinking is the direct effect of the id. Consequently, the id merely needs the satisfaction of the unconscious demands of the pleasure principle and Jake falls victim to neurotic anxieties

Brett’s abnormal urge for drinking is also the unconscious desire for psychic energy. She seems sick of the other talks except drinking. While sitting with Jake and Count, she is fed up of their conversation with her. She tells Count, “This hell of dull talks. How about some of that champagne?” (Hemingway, 2004, p.51). Her remarks expose her deep love and urge for wine. She does not want to listen to other talks except drinking. As Brett shows her annoyance over the dull talks, the Count turns to wine, and starts checking it. Jake narrates, “The Count reached down and twirled the bottles in the shiny bucket” (p. 51). The Count asks Brett, “You are always drinking, my dear. Why don’t you just talk?” (p.51). The Count’s comment, “You are always drinking, my dear” shows Brett’s incessant inclination for alcohol. The id of Brett is so dominant that she does not like to talk about other things. The urges of her pleasure principle have affected her ego, which is evident in her rash acts and remarks. When Jake gives the bottle to bartender, she asks him for more wine “Let’s have one more drink of that. My nerves are rotten” (p.158). She strives for compulsive drinking throughout the novel; her alcoholic dependence leads her to hasty and reckless behaviors. Her constant neurotic anxieties make her life like a hell. The excessive urge for drinking is the direct effect of her dominant id, which has led her to show such weird behavior.

The fiancé of Brett, Mike, is also a heavy drinker, and he behaves abnormally when he is drunk. He is a bankrupt and some false friends have deserted him. Like the other characters, he also strives to remove the trauma of war from his mind; he seeks an escape in heavy drinking.

Jake calls him a “bad drunk” (p.129). Mike’s remarks show that excessive drinking has also affected him psychologically. “I’m rather drunk,” Mike said. “I think I’ll stay rather drunk. This is



all awfully amusing, but it's not too pleasant for me. It's not too pleasant for me" (Hemingway, 2004, p.176). He knows that drinking has led him to psychological complexities and anxieties, but he still feels that drinking is amusing and pleasurable. Excessive drinking makes him peevish and blunt and he mostly embarrasses Brett with his reckless conversation.

The neurotic anxieties of Mike create extreme psychological complexities in his personalities. Bill and Count are also drinkers, and they relish wines like other characters in the novel. Bill is a war veteran; he drinks heavily and adds some good humor in the company of his friends.

Jake calls him a "good drunk" (p.129). Count is a true epicure, and his sole aim is to eat, drink and be merry. He enjoys with Brett, and he buys some good wine for her. He takes great pleasure while drinking with Brett. He adores Brett when she is drunk, and he thinks that she seems sober and beautiful when she is drunk. His remarks about Brett expose his adoration for Brett and wine. "There, my dear. Now you enjoy that slowly, and then you can get drunk. My dear, you are charming when you are drunk" (p.52). His love for Brett and wine has surpassed all his desires. He says about Brett, "She is the only lady I have ever known who was as charming when she was drunk as when she was sober" (p.52). The Count is absolutely under the influence of the id, and his acts and remarks reveal his epicurean nature. Moreover, the Count's comments reveal the intensity of Brett's love and addiction for wine.

The moral anxieties of the superego in Robert Cohn abstains him from drinking. Cohn is a Jew; he clings to old and Victorian values. Jake narrates about the nature of Cohn, "Mike was a bad drunk. Brett was a good drunk. Bill was a good drunk. Cohn was never drunk" (p.129). He is the sole man in the novel who is guided by the superego and he is in the hold of moral anxieties. He wants Brett to love and obey him like a traditional Victorian woman. He believes in conventional notion of marriage and love. However, Cohn's liaison with Brett shatters his traditional and Victorian values. His relation with Brett brings some drastic changes in his personality. He becomes overemotional, effeminate, creep and weird; his relation with Brett stirs his id which shatters his superego. Malik and Karuna (2015) comment on the later development in his personality compare him with other characters and regard him a different one from other characters. He is a symbol of the romantic ideas that existed before the war. However, his love affairs with Brett ruin his romantic values. At the end, because of the dominant id, his moral anxieties are transformed into neurotic anxieties.

The ego and superego of Pedro Romero make him the only sane and sober character; he acts and behaves sensibly throughout the novel. His realistic and moral anxieties create many challenges for him when he is in relation with Brett; however, he gracefully overcomes all the complexities. Hemingway presents him as an ideal man who has the capability to cope with all the adverse conditions of life. He is a brave bullfighter, and he kills many bulls in the fiesta. Romero has a balanced personality; he never talks or acts irresponsibly. Spika (1962) is of the view that Romero is a true hero in the novel. He represents the real manhood; therefore, all the male characters need to follow his moral integrity and manly nature. Of course, he is a real hero of the novel as he has





acquired all the qualities of a great character. In addition, unlike the other characters, Romero stands firmly when he is in relation with Brett. He wants Brett to shun her promiscuous nature and aggressive behavior and he strives to change her code of conduct. The untamed id of Brett cannot subdue his ego and superego.

### 3. Conclusion

After the thorough analysis of the characters, it is obvious that the dominant id has created neurotic anxieties in the characters. The traumatic experience of the war has ruined their peace of mind and happiness; consequently, their id instinctively strives for pleasure and psychic energy and they indulge in hedonism. The trauma of war has stimulated the id of the characters and they search for excessive pleasure. War is the main culprit for the dominance of in the novel. Brett, who is a central character, is a promiscuous woman. She is an obsessive bitch, and she crosses all limits for the satisfaction of her compulsive erotic urges. Similarly, Jake, Mike, Bill and Count are heavy drinkers, and they indulge in extreme drinking for psychic energy of Eros. Cohn's superego and moral anxieties also perish when he surrenders to the compulsive urges of Brett's id. The untamed id stirs up neurotic anxieties in the characters, which creates imbalance and disorder in their personalities. Consequently, the characters are facing some psychological problems. Romero is the only sensible and sober character whose ego and superego are constant throughout the novel. He has balanced and sane personality; his great manners and noble character make him exceptional among all the characters in the novel.

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