

The relationship
between Freud and
Dora: insight into the
workings of a
daughter' ...



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Sigmund Freud represents an extremely rare breed of literary genius. His ability to delve into the human subconscious and extrapolate meaning from the apparently nonsensical gives his works an exploratory, constantly twisting feel that finds its own place in the history of literature. In particular, 'Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' epitomizes the Freudian style of writing as a unique combination of literature and science, as he converges the two topics in a harmonic medley that lends both a rich narrative of rhetorical devices alongside a psychoanalysis and justification of Dora's hysteric symptoms. The next way in which Freud creates a unique and memorable piece of work is through his ability to construct a massive intricate linkage that remains constant throughout the Analysis, which operates on a panoramic and explicit view as well. Alongside this, from a more holistic perspective, we see numerous twists and revelations throughout the work; none more so than the realization of an intimate relationship between Freud and Dora, which Freud fails to see, and ultimately becomes the primary gain from the case history of Dora. What makes the Analysis a unique text is Freud's combination of 'scientific' postulates and gripping narrative. The former method is referred to in quotations due the fact that psychoanalysis is not an exact science, but actually "an art, which would otherwise be useless, turned to account for the discovery of the hidden and repressed parts of mental life". From a general outlook, the Analysis is structured in such a way that Freud will first engage the reader through a descriptive narrative of Dora's situation, pulling the reader in by use of eloquent syntax. Then, a psychoanalysis will follow, where he employs extended metaphors and specific analogies to communicate his most technical points to his audience, and in this sense, <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-freud-and-dora-insight-into-the-workings-of-a-daughters-mind/>

language serves as a gateway to explanation for us, just as it does in the dream world. One instance of such metaphoric dialogue is where he relates Dora's unconscious thoughts that are twined around a structure of organic connections to "festoons of flowers twined around a wire". Or when speaking of somatic compliance, he compares the earliest development of a psychical symptom as a real organic irritation of the throat to "a grain of sand around which an oyster forms its pearl". These analogies engage and submerge the reader in the text, and create a harmony between scientific empiricism and rhetorical technique. Another way that Freud masters language and uses it to further validate his points is through his sharp eye for detecting puns and double entendres in the diction of dreams. Such as in Dora's first dream, where he notices that because there is a 'fire', Dora must be suppressing intense emotions by using its antonym. Here, 'fire' is actually an opposite façade for 'wet', which he then uses as a junction to suggest that Dora is a.) Being saved by her father for wetting her bed, and b.) Protecting her genitalia from being moistened or sexually aroused by employing the antipode of 'wet'. This is but one instance where Freud uses his vast knowledge of diction to create linkage through free association, a technique he is well known for. Furthermore, Freud's bypassing of conventional 19th century societal norms is another reason why Dora is seen as a memorable work. Just 30 or so years earlier, Emile Zola's *Therese Raquin* was received with public outrage over the graphic sexual content of the novel. Freud however sees it as an essential and necessary component in deducing the causes for Dora's symptoms, and thus chooses to delve deep into sexual themes insofar as they relate to Dora's psychological issues.

Although Freud discusses such intimate realist topics so publicly, he does <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-freud-and-dora-insight-into-the-workings-of-a-daughters-mind/>

provide brief asides as to why he is doing so, justifying the discussion of such topics by referring to “the uncertainty in regard to the boundaries of what is to be called normal sexual life, when we take different races and different epochs into account, should in itself be enough to cool the zealot’s ardour”, and also the necessary nature of referring to such topics in this case of hysteria. Such cogent rhetoric is exactly typical of Freud, and a key example of how his eloquent wielding of language. This also demonstrates his persuasive tone, which exemplifies his use of diction to his advantage. Possibly the most significant and distinctive characteristic of the Analysis is how Freud manages to piece together an intricate web of ideas that is continually added to and adapted throughout the novel. This linkage of theories and hypotheses of Dora’s symptoms eventually culminates in a massive intertwined combination of deductions that provide us with a picture of the inner workings of Dora’s mind. Because Freud sees Dora’s symptoms as having real somatic roots, yet being hyperbolized by a variable psychical element, he searches for the twisted and most troubled parts hidden away in Dora’s subconscious. This is probably Freud’s greatest talent, his mastering of linkage that allows him to see deep through Dora’s surface and into her clandestine thoughts. Another noticeable thing about Freud is that he leaves nothing untouched or unexamined, from dreams to subtle movements to diction, he takes in everything about a patient and somehow orders the actions into a super picture. We see this come into effect when Dora is in session with him, and at the simple subconscious touching of a reticule, Freud sees “betrayal oozes out of (her) at every pore”, and links this subtle act to a slight release of subconscious longing for sexual pleasure, a want even she does not know of. From Dora’s dyspnoea, or breathing troubles, <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-freud-and-dora-insight-into-the-workings-of-a-daughters-mind/>

Freud weaves together an explanation by piecing together several different pieces of information. He estimates that Dora being near to her father's room, she often heard him struggle to breathe. This is then associated with "detached fragments of the act of copulation", and Dora's subconscious takes in something sexual from the coughing. Thus, he states, her troubled breathing is her subconscious fantasy of sex. Another instance of Freud's talent for noticing the miniscule connections between apparently unrelated incidents is his indication that when Herr K. kissed her, she secretly desired him. He comes to this conclusion by first relating her disgust of the kiss to the governess' warning that all men are untrustworthy. This then causes her to find a similarity between her father and the general perspective of men that the governess described. Then we see that because her father was impotent and suffered a venereal disease, all men must be untrustworthy, and prepared to pass on venereal diseases. Thus, despite her subconscious love for him, the slightest emotional impulse tipped the balance in the other direction, inspiring disgust instead of acceptance. However, he also divines the reason for her aphonia, or inability to speak, due to Dora's belief that it is not necessary to communicate when Herr K is gone. These deductions of Dora's true psychical causes for her symptoms characterize Freud's method of linkage perfectly, and thus we see two polar opposite emotions battling each other inside Dora, all linking back to the primary emotions surrounding her father and Herr K. Freud achieves the linkage of several, seemingly irrelevant or unrelated points to a master network by two primary methods, which are empiricism and the belief in the close boundary of opposites. The former relies on investigating Dora's past and finding the clues that link her present symptoms to her troubled childhood. The latter, however, is the <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-freud-and-dora-insight-into-the-workings-of-a-daughters-mind/>

more specifically Freudian approach. Here, Freud relies on the ideal that when dealing a hysterical patient, the use of opposites plays a vital role in the analysis. Because Dora's mind is "dominated by the opposition between reality and phantasy", it becomes even more difficult and complicated to break down her emotional barriers and see what true emotions lie behind. An instance of Freud's handling of opposites is on the holistic view of Dora's dream. In reality, Dora believes she "can get no quiet sleep until I am out of this house". However, in the dream world, her subconscious expresses this by an abstract reversal. In her dream, she claims, "as soon as I was outside I woke up". In spite of this, though it appears that Dora is insulted by Herr K's advancement on her, and that she must leave their home immediately, her dream suggests that her actual subconscious love for him had to be "repressed with so much energy" that, again, the opposite of what she actually wants takes place in her dream. As explained earlier through the process of linkage, because of Dora's experience with the mixed connotations of her father's coughing fits in bed, and her generalized projection of her father's impotence on to all men, such a fine line runs between her ideals of sexual longing and morbid anxiety. This is another factor why she further represses her love for Herr K, instead of surrendering to it, as a stimulation of the oral and erotogenic zone seems to bring to life feelings of sickness and loss of breath. To the average observer, such behaviour would appear to be erratic, given that we have seen somatic symptoms emerge from Dora due to her love for Herr K, but to Freud, all that needs to be done is divide the amalgamation of opposites, and link together the different facts to piece together an image of Dora's inner workings. This "juxtaposition of the most dissimilar tendencies" is at the source of Dora's

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hysterical issues, as with such a fine line dividing such contrary ideals, “ it is never possible to calculate towards which side the decision will incline in such a conflict of motives: whether towards the removal of the repression or towards its reinforcement.” This oxymoronic motif of the mutual dependence of contrary ideas is present throughout the analysis as a continuous undertone, which piece by piece reveals to us Dora’s tumultuous yet fiery emotions of love, hate, anxiety and jealousy. Hence we see how they fit together in her mind, each with its own repression, displacement, or exaggeration, and each with its own complex justification as to why. Thus Freud makes ordered sense of what would appear to be irrational hysteria, through his technique of linkage and being able to recognize when a true emotion is being masked by using its opposite, the two skills that are typically Freudian, and make this case history so interesting. Moreover, despite all of Freud’s intellectual prowess, he seems to only realize that Dora had transferred her feelings of adoration and rage from Herr K, her father, and Frau K only at the very end of the analysis. In hindsight, after the analyst points this fact out, we see just how profound the relationship between the two was. Freud himself says “ no one who, like me, conjures up the most evil of those half-tamed demons that inhabit the human breast, and seeks to wrestle with them, can expect to come through the struggle unscathed.” A fine example of his metaphoric style of conveying a scientific deduction in rhetorical syntax. Though the Analysis is generally viewed as a failure to complete the treatment and cure Dora, Freud recognizes the huge importance of the phenomenon known as ‘ transference’ in his postscript as one of the case histories most successful and fruitful discoveries. This is the act of transferring past psychic experiences and feelings onto the present

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physician, which Freud notes must have begun at the time of the first dream, where her subconscious was not only implying a fantasy to leave the K's home (symbolized as her own burning house), but also an elucidation of the need to leave her treatment. Another signal of Dora's transference is her want to exact revenge and desert Freud, just as Herr K had done to her. This is only recognized later in the Analysis, and is seen as the beginning of Dora's process of transference. A further instance of this conversion is evident in the first dream, where the smell of smoke strongly relates to a memory of Freud, as he too had constantly smelled of cigars. Apart from these empirical evidences of transference, we see a subtext throughout the Analysis brought to light. In the eleven weeks of treatment, Freud was seeing the girl for five hours a day, and through his direct and frank approach to revealing and discussing his theories on her symptoms with her, a deep and personal relationship is established. For a neurotic girl of just eighteen years, Freud is discussing what no one else would ever dare to, confronting her issues head on and revealing where the true nature of the causes to her symptoms lay. This discovery of the connections between her subconscious activities and link them to her hysterical somatic manifestations. Freud is thus unraveling the girl's subconscious for her, showing her things that even she did not know of, and thus he takes on a dominant figure in her life. Whether she associates this figure with negative or positive connotations is not an issue, as the dichotomy between love and hate with Dora is so weak that when dealing with hysterical patients, as mentioned earlier, the slightest burst of "fresh emotions (can) tip the balance". As Freud explains, new symptoms find expression by channeling old emotions into new characters.

Although Freud is successful in revealing to Dora her love for her father and <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-freud-and-dora-insight-into-the-workings-of-a-daughters-mind/>

Herr K, he does not complete the treatment, and hence Dora must find an alternative outlet for her troubled subconscious thoughts. She does this by substituting Freud for both her father and Herr K. Thus her eventual exacting of revenge over Freud is the expression of old emotions of a coveted vengeance on Herr K and her father, expressed through her actions on Freud by breaking off her treatment. In summation, we see how Freud utilizes the close relationship of opposites, the abstract symbolism of her dreams, and his method of free association to deduce the psychical causes of her somatic irregularities. Throughout the process of Freud coming to these conclusions, he is building up a stronger relationship between him and Dora, and as he piece by piece proves to her the hysteric nature of her symptoms, and reveals her subconscious love for the K's and her father, she finds a variable outlet of her emotions in Freud. This mixture of emotions of love for her father, and also vengeful regret for Herr K among others culminates in Dora ultimately breaking off treatment, as her feelings of extracting revenge on Freud overcome any others. What we must be ever aware of when reading this Analysis is that psychoanalytic treatment is not an exact science, just as Freud purports, it is "in complete ignorance" of these mental phenomena, and therefore Freud must use a specific method for his interpretations. He is searching not only for the simple cure of Dora's hysterical issues, but also for their true meaning, and thus in dealing with such complicated questions, he is bound to give intricate, complicated responses. Even so, what makes Dora a memorable work is not a question of whether Freud cures his patient's hysteria. Instead, it is the vast web of connections, the oxymoronic and dramatic emotions, the struggle of contrary feelings, the engineering of

eloquent literature into a scientific study, and the subliminal tumultuous love story of Ida Bauer that make this text a truly Freudian work or art.