

Subconscious in Nadia Hashimi's *When the Moon is Low*

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Abstract

The present study aims to find the subconscious perspective in Nadia Hashimi's *When the Moon is Low* through the characters. The renowned writer Nadia Hashimi is a pediatrician who has also become a writer. She has conveyed the ideas of the Afghan people and their welfare through her writing. Her famous works are *The Pearls That Broke Its Shell*, *A House Without Windows*, *One Half from the East*, and *Spark Like Stars*. In *When the Moon is Low*, Hashimi has portrayed Fereiba's subconscious thoughts. This study is based on qualitative and content analysis, adopting Sigmund Freud's theory of the subconscious. The study's result highlights subconscious thoughts of explored through Fereiba. The study reveals the Afghan women's psychological struggles, depression, uncertain life patterns and the emotional turmoil during cruel Taliban rule. The results of the study are compared and analyzed with previous studies related to the subconscious.

Keywords: assassination, subconscious, fear, suffering, dream, behavior.

Introduction

The subconscious relates to the mind, particularly in terms of all reactions and automatic responses (Pratt, 1913). It functions as a vast memory that stores past experiences and information that inspires thoughts, feelings, and behaviors without expressing them. The characteristics of the subconscious mind include habitual actions, filtering sensory data, and storing memories that approval the conscious mind to focus on higher-level cognition and decision-making. The subconscious mind's features remain: a repository of memories and information, an outcome of behavior, sensory filtering, a connection to emotions, subjective, and unreasoning. The concept of the subconscious is not related to awareness, and this term became widespread in the early 20th century in the fields of psychology, spirituality, and religion (Pratt, 1913). Joseph Murphy popularized the concept of 'subconscious' in *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* (1963). John Norris coined this term in French, "Subconscient" in "An Essay Towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World: The immediate objects of sense, are not the objects of Intellection, they being of a Subconscient nature" (1708). (Janet, 1899). Sigmund Freud was a notable psychological theorist who used the term 'subconscious' in 1893. Then, he refined the term in favor of unconscious (Laplanche, 1973).

Nadia Hashimi is a popular novelist, a pediatrician, and a former Democratic congressional candidate. She has written numerous works, such as *The Pearl that Broke Its Shell* (2014), *When the Moon Is Low* (2015), *A House Without Windows* (2016), and *Sparks Like Stars* (2021). The present study adopts Hashimi's *When the Moon Is Low* (2015).

Review of Literature

The study of Marc Steven Bernstein explores the collective subconscious in David Grossman's *Ayen Erekh!*, Ahavah and Yenudit Katzir's *Schlafstunde*. In the past three decades, Israeli writers have explored the impact of the holocaust in their society through their writings. The author analyzes David Grossman's fiction, *See Under Love* (1986), and Yehudit Katzir's "Schlafstunde". It appeared in the collection *Closing the Sea* (1989). These two writers don't have the experience of the Shoah to explore its impact on Israeli society. In *See Under Love*, the writer explicates that the voice of the young protagonist is unequaled in modern Hebrew literature. The protagonist's name is Momik Neumann, who is nine years old. His nickname is Shlomo. He grew up in Jerusalem in the 1950s. He realizes the pain that he realizes his parents and other survivors who surround him. Due to the war, he missed his parents and changed his life. In "Schlafstunde", it is taken from the collection of *Sogrin et ha-yam*. It comprises four stories. This story is based on a tale of retrospection and the narrator's mind, who recalls childhood summers spent with her cousin, Shaul. His nickname is Uli (Bernstein, 2005).

The study of Funderburk states the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Joseph Conrad is a notable writer and is known for the book *Heart of Darkness*. In this fiction, Marlow and Kurtz are the main characters. The author mentions Kurtz's repression of his homosexual desires in Schreber's case. The character of Kurtz is considered a subject of narcissistic homosexuality through Freudian theory. Marlow is an individual transitioning through Lacan's mirror stage theory (Funderburk, 2009).

The study of Jan Frederick Zeschky mentions the subconscious in the works of Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii. The writer explored dreams, his experience, and the use of the subconscious in the characters. Dreamlike reality focuses on two sides. They are confused between dream and reality, and reality to the extreme that it appears unreal. The author utilized Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. It comprises three kinds of aspects. They are conscious, unconscious, and preconscious. The author included the classification of the id, ego, and superego (Zeschky, 2009).

The study by Siouxzi Mernagh analyzes the fictions *White Tales* and *Peep Show*. These works focus on the spiraling tensions between intensity and excess, desire and Jouissance. He compares these works with the 18-minute subconscious narrative film "The Dangers". In this film, Alice is the protagonist. She and her partner, Hugo, enter the hotel. The author points out two scenes from the movie. In *White Tales*, the female narrator acts upon desires that are violent and sexualized. This novel is written in the 'stream of consciousness' method. This tale begins with a mysterious narrator and a roadside murder, and a kidnapping takes place whereby the protagonist kills two travelers and takes their unborn child as her own (Mernagh, 2010).

The study by Filip Svensson analyzes the work *Frankenstein*, which deals with the creative chaos behind Shelley's Gothic story. This work focuses on psychoanalysis, and the author used Freud's psychoanalytic theory, which relates to dreams. The author utilized Maslow's theory for a formalist approach. The narrative of *Frankenstein* relates to a sense of wanting to be understood on a deeper level, specifically the subconscious.

The author analyzes Freud's conscious and unconscious. Subconscious provides a sense of immersion into a world. It is the ultimate creator of the mind. The fiction Frankenstein deals with a journey into the actual depths of the subconscious (Svensson, 2013).

The study of Krishanu Kumar Dar analyzes consciousness and the subconscious mind. The author truncates Vivekananda's ideas and classifies the human mind into three parts. They are subconscious, conscious, and superconscious. It is a higher contemplative state of mind, and it controls emotional desires that are detached from the mind. Das mentions Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and he is advanced 'Topographic Theory of Mind'. Freud divided categories such as conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. In psychology, the subconscious is used in preference to the term 'unconscious'. He classifies four houses of the mind. They are the house of memory, the house of emotions, the house of intelligence, and the house of physical activities. These four houses come under sub-partitioned, categorized into three types. They are reflexive, short-term, and long-term (Das, 2018).

The study of Marjiya Baktyer Ahmed mentions the subconscious in Edgar Allen Poe's gothic fiction. Edgar Allen Poe is a notable American author who explores the unreliable supremacy of the conscious and subconscious mind and remains unparalleled. The writer explained their unconscious desires. Freud divided three categories: conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Consciousness is attached to present perception, memories, feelings, thoughts, and fantasies. The preconscious deals with thoughts, memories, and dreams. The unconscious is a larger aspect and the source of motivation. In William Wilson, Poe elucidates the power of the dark unconsciousness that includes madness, horror, and an explicable sense of guilt (Ahmed, 2018).

The study by Wijesekara Mudiyansele Sumith Danajaya and Ebenezer Breman Veerasingam associates psychoanalysis with the projection of human expressions. The authors link Katherine Mansfield's *The Voyage* to Freudian thought. The authors used a textual analysis method. The human unconscious mind consists of four kinds of things such as painful experiences and emotions, fears, unresolved conflicts, and guilty desires. The entire story unfolds in third-person narration and has three sections. They are *Before the Voyage*, *The Voyage*, and *After the Voyage*. Fenella is the protagonist. The first section deals with the story of the girl who goes to the harbor with her grandma to get the Picton Boat. During this, she sees the old Wharf and cattle trucks. Here, the sea is a symbol of mental transaction. The Picton Boat is the symbol of inner catastrophe and a reflection of the subconscious of Fenella (Danajaya and Veerasingam, 2018).

The study of Cuney Ozata mentions Sigmund Freud, who introduced psychoanalysis to the medical world, and highlights the book *The Interpretation of Dreams*. He explains that people feel the effect of two concepts in the subconscious. They are sexuality and fear of death. The author utilized the personality theory. Simon Stephens is a contemporary playwright and is known for the play *Bluebird*. It takes place in London. This story is based on psychological dilemmas. Jimmy is the main character, and his ex-wife is Clare Macneil. Robert is a drunk customer, and his daughter was murdered, so he blames himself, and he is in a state of depression. This story focuses on a taxi driver, Jimmy (Ozata, 2021).

The study of Muhammad Javaid Anwar, Iqra Hameed, and Muhammad Naveed Anwar focuses on Freudian defense mechanisms of denial and reality perception in Sabyn Javeri's short story, "A World without Men". In this story, the narrator and Saira managed with their suppressed desires for a love connection by putting themselves through denial. Saira is the best example of abrupt, violent behavior of unconscious desires and wants. Her character is shaped by denial and a sense of reality. This study explicates the universal human

experience of attempting to make sense of harsh facts and hidden truths. This research aims to enhance the comprehension of the motivations and actions of the characters. The narrator's reaction is an example of the denial defensive mechanism in action (Anwar, Hameed, and Anwar, 2023).

The study by Kasturi Sinha and Gurudev Meher abbreviates subconscious in Murakami's fiction. Haruki Murakami is a popular Japanese author who explores cultural division in his works. Most of his works reveal loneliness and dislocation through characters. He used magical realism to explore the subconscious. Murakami's short fiction, *The Elephant Vanishes*, deals with the complexity of human pleasure and voting rights. *Kafka on the Shore* and *First Person Singular* deal with perception, memory, and existence. The conscious mind is considered to be a part of the physical world. The unconscious mind is considered to be a metaphysical world. The subconscious is paranoid to access this (Sinha and Meher, 2023).

The study by Sahil Srivastava reveals the human mind, which is filled with complexity and ingenuity. The subconscious mind is filled with mystery and intrigue. It abbreviates the wealth of thoughts, emotions, memories, and processes. The author mentions three kinds of tier mind models: conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. Consciousness encompasses all thoughts and actions that fall within our conscious awareness. Subconscious encompasses all our reactions and automated actions. The unconscious encompasses past events and memories (Srivastava, 2024).

The study of Zeinab Kikvidze focuses on Zaira Arsenishvili's *Alas, Life!* and mentions the red terror instilled immeasurable psychological fear and despair among subsequent generations. This fiction is based on the stigma of Soviet repression that affects the characters' subconscious. This study is divided into two categories. They are Christianity and Rustaveli. Firstly, Christianity symbolizes the crucifixion, sensations of enduring suffering, and divine protection. Secondly, Rustaveli emerges through a search for the essence of humanity (Kikvidze, 2024).

The existing studies indicate the idea of depression, and these studies are conducted by various authors in different fields and works. Some authors find depression in various texts and fields, but no one has investigated depression in Nadia Hashimi's selected text. So, the present study will bridge the gap between the works of literature. Therefore, the present study struggles to dig out the depression in Hashimi's select text *When the Moon is Low*

Methodology

This section focuses on the qualitative method, especially the theoretical approach. The present study considers only one theorist, Sigmund Freud. He is known for the book *The Interpretation of Dreams*. He explored subconscious ideas in his work. The conscious mind is compared to a fountain playing in the sun and falling back into the great subterranean pool of the subconscious from which it rises (Freud, 2005). Likewise, Hashimi has explored, "My behavior was unforgiveable. I'd revealed my private thoughts and our family affairs to our neighbor's son, a faceless voice behind a wall. Where was my honor? And how could I trust him to keep our conversations to himself? I was suddenly flustered" (Hashimi, 2015:54). Fereiba's subconscious mind is revealed through her conversation with an imaginary friend in the neighbor's yard. Freud mentions, "Repression, then, certainly does not ensue from tension reaching intolerable levels due to the non-satisfaction of a drive impulse. The defensive measures available to the organism in this situation must be dealt with in another context" (Freud, 2005:36). He points out intolerable levels in the repression

stage. The same repressive ideas have been rendered in Hashimi's text as, "In my years in Afghanistan, I survived many regime changes, starting with my mother's death and my father's remarriage. Some changes had been harder to swallow than others" (Hashimi, 2015:88). Fereiba faced many obstacles in Afghanistan and remembers her survival. It started with her mother's death and her father's remarriage. She was forced to stop getting her education to serve the family. It is a pathetic for Fereiba to lose the mother, the grandfather and later her lovable husband Mahmood to the Taliban assassination and repressive stage of Fereiba, especially intolerable levels in her journey of life.

Freud highlights the unconscious mind as, "We might think it would be just as easy to settle the question of unconscious sensations, feelings, and emotions. After all, it belongs to the very essence of a feeling that it is felt- i.e, known to consciousness. It would be quite impossible, then, for feelings, sensations, and emotions to be unconscious. In psychoanalytical practice, however, we regularly speak of unconscious love, hate, anger, etc., and we even find we cannot avoid the strange combination 'unconscious sense of guilt' or the paradoxical 'unconscious anxiety'. (Freud, 2005:59). He abbreviates the unconscious sensations, feelings, and emotions, but the person can think, feel, and emotions in an unconscious state. Similarly, the conscious mind explored in Hashimi's text is, "I turned around to see a luminous figure, a man, standing behind me. I dared to breathe as he placed his hand on my shoulder, so lightly that I hardly felt his touch. I followed his long tapered fingers to his arm until I could take in all of him. He was old; a short, white beard covered his chin, and crisscrossed wrinkles linked his face. Thick, white brows hung heavily, leaving just slits of his blue-gray eyes. He was a friend, I knew instantly. My racing heart slowed at the tender sound of his voice. Fereiba-jan. In the darkness, when you cannot see the ground under your feet and when your fingers touch nothing but night, you are not alone. I will stay with you as moonlight stays on water" (Hashimi, 2015:18). Nadia Hashimi mentioned the subconscious mind of Fereiba which reveals her alienation, longing and repressed wish fulfillment in future as a woman. She belief in superstitious also throws light on her naive behavior and an orphan girl's subconscious wish for a motherly love through images. This also express the level of anxiety for future of Afghan women.

Freud says, "Processes in the pcs system- regardless of whether they are already conscious or merely capable of consciousness-demonstrate an inhibition of the tendency of invested ideas towards discharge... the pcs system is also responsible for making interaction possible between ideational contents so that they can influence one another, for ordering these ideas chronologically, for introducing one or more forms of censorship, for reality-testing, and for the reality principle (Freud, 2005:70-71). Likewise, Hashimi mentions, "Nothing is foolish to the adolescent. The adolescent acts without questioning the wisdom of the action. I returned every day after that, slinking through the trees, spying the familiar leather sandals, and taking my place under the mulberry tree. It became routine: school, housework, and orchard. I would stay awake late into the night to work on homework since I couldn't concentrate in the orchard. After two silent weeks, I decided to let the stranger know I was aware of his presence. The stalemate was driving me mad" (Hashimi, 2015:39). Fereiba's mentally unstable nature is revealed. Such people can be influenced by the person they love. She considers the invisible character as her soulmate. Fereiba's character in all stages from adolescent to becoming a mother of two children she faces isolation and trusts her intuitions. It gives her gratification to move forward in her life.

Freud mentions, “The content of the pcs system stems partly from the life of the drives, partly from perception. It is unclear to what extent the processes in this system can directly influence the ucs” (Freud, 2005:76-77). He says that the preconscious deals with life and its perception. This process influences the unconscious. Likewise, Hashimi explores, “Please find a way to give her a hand in making this choice for herself and help her family to make the decision that is in her best interests. Please free her to pursue her studies in teaching so that she can, in turn, help others. Please do not let anyone hold her back from her goals. He paused. And please help me to achieve my goals, both in school and in life. Please bring us both a brighter future” (Hashimi, 2015:59). Here, the preconscious system of Fereiba’s choosing partner will lead her family to make the decision. She wants to attain her goal to become a teacher and requests that her parents bring a bright future. As an Afghan women the grandfather of Fereiba, feels education is the conscious decision for their awakening from unconscious servitude. Studying subconscious thoughts and activities of Fereiba helps her to make conscious decisions that can stabilize the life of Afghan women, children and family.

The above content analysis explains that Hashimi’s *When the Moon is Low* validates the theory of the subconscious. Many incidents related to the subconscious are mentioned in her text. All the incidents are linked to another incident in various novels. Finally, the author’s depiction of the subconscious in Nadia Hashimi’s selected text is highly traceable. Then, a discussion is a key component to compare and investigate the subconscious in Hashimi’s text with previous results.

Discussion

Some studies are related to the subconscious in literature. These studies are compared and scrutinized concerning the subconscious ideas that are rendered in Hashimi’s text through the protagonist, Fereiba an Afghan women.

The study of Kieran O’Halloran analyzes the subconscious in James Joyce’s *Eveline*. In this story, a young woman is thinking about a new life away from an unhappy existence, which involves caring for a violent father. This story is taken from the anthology “*Dubliners*”. *Eveline* wants to explore another life with Frank. He is a very kind, manly, and open-hearted person. She writes a goodbye letter to her father. It reveals her conscious state. She suffers from a mental paralysis (O’Halloran, 2007). Similarly, the local Taliban had decided to make an example of Mahmood Waziri. The rest of the family would not be targeted, he believed, but no one could say with any certainty. Just one month after the news of Mahmood’s assassination, Fereiba’s belly began to ache. Aziz was born exactly after nine months and nine days. Sameer (elder son), Sameera (daughter) and Aziz (new born) were her family now and their peaceful life future mattered to her. She feared her son would be swallowed by the Taliban, and as a woman, there was little I could do to help them survive. They decided to leave Kabul, bidding goodbye to our neighbors. I have no choice but to get my children out of Kabul. Their stomachs are empty, their lips parched. There’s nothing for us here. With Raisa and Abdul Rahim’s concern they left Kabul towards London to Najima’s house though we were filled with fear and resentment. Though leaving Kabul was the decision of Mahmood also. Now they are going without him.

The study of Atour Isaac Michael abbreviates subconscious in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Brontë is a notable English writer, and her life is affected that reflected in the work *Jane Eyre*. In this fiction, a young woman faces and overcomes many obstacles in her journey. This study considers the use of dreams and depicts a glimpse of her own and her sisters’ lives. In 1824, Mr. Brontë, Charlotte’s father, decided to send

his four daughters to ‘The School of Cowan Bridge’. This novel explores the bad conditions of the sisters and their sufferings. The school incident is reflected in this fiction through her writing. The novelist’s life is her love for a married man. Similarly, Jane falls in love with Rochester, who is a married man. The writer, Brontë, experienced the same feelings. Jane is living with her hidden fears in her dreams and is unable to get clear of them (Michael, 2017). Likewise,

The study of Anis Surya Trisanti and Anwar Efendi focuses on the personality characteristics of female characters who experience traumatic pisanthrophobia psychoanalysis in Shireishou’s *Obsessive Loves*. The authors utilized a descriptive qualitative method. The data collection method is also used to tap techniques and recording techniques. In *Obsessive Loves*, the story is based on sexual abuse experienced by teenage girls. This fiction deals with the sexual harassment of female characters. The subconscious is a collection of emotions and memories called the subjective mind. Subconscious thinking dominates character hallucinations, daydreaming behavior, behavior to ignore others, and behavior to avoid crowds (Trisanti and Efendi, 2023). Similarly,

The study of Hafiiz Imran Nawaz, Zara Kayani, and Farzana analyzes the themes of repression, madness, and feminine identity in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*. This study focuses on Gilman’s personal experiences, contextualizing the socio-political landscape of the 19th century. The authors used Freud’s ‘Psychoanalytic theory’ to analyze the protagonist’s subconscious struggle. This study is based on a qualitative approach and combines both textual analysis and close reading within *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Gilman’s famous work *The Yellow Wallpaper* published in her own magazine, “*The Forerunner*”. She expressed her own ideas about women’s issues. She faced many struggles and married twice. Before her death, she faced breast cancer. After the birth of her daughter, she suffered from stress and depression, which led the writer to write the work *The Yellow Wallpaper*. This story deals with a woman who is isolated from her husband in a room for rest due to her mental illness. The narrator discussed how mental health affects women (Nawaz, Kayani, and Farzana, 2024). Likewise, Fereiba the predominant character expresses many mental illness as the husband decides to live or die in Kabul bidding farewell to the wife and children. The struggles and stress she faces with her children on her journey towards London without legal and official documents is filled with unexpected twists and turns that is filled with anxiety and depression. Their interpersonal conflict is captured.

From the above discussion, these studies focus on subconscious thinking of the predominant character Fereiba, her interpersonal conflict through her soliloquy to the imaginary characters, dreams, superstitious beliefs in the novel *When the Moon is Low*. The present discussion is compared with the other studies’ results, especially other novels with Hashimi’s text. Each study and novel explore the ideas of the subconscious, and the way of narration only differs from these novels. Finally, subconscious ideas are rendered in Hashimi’s text that are highly visible through the protagonist, Fereiba.

Conclusion

The present study spotlights the subconscious in Hashimi’s *When the Moon is Low*. It is rare in literature, especially in Afghan-American literature. Subconscious diversifies from both psychology and literature. In literature, subconscious ideas are rendered in the form of writing. This study analyzes the subconscious in Hashimi’s select texts and adopts Freud’s theory of the subconscious. Finally, the key aspects of the

subconscious are explored in Hashimi's text through her writing. The outcome of the study is, to read the Afghan peoples' behavior through everyday actions, habits and emotional responses to the Taliban's tyranny. The thought process is observed. Their mental conflict of Afghan women for their quest for identity, war, displacement, family relationships are studied. Afghan men, women and children life patterns are compared and related with other studies Hence, their life filled with fear, depression and other emotions are read. The limitations of the study are, most of the studies related to the subconscious are in psychology, not in literature. Many theorists exist concerning depression ideas, but the number of theorists is there regarding depression. The focus of this study is to ensure mental and societal wellbeing of Afghan Family. Future investigation can be carried out in the areas of anxiety about motherhood, unconsciousness, cultural expectations of Afghan people, their displacement and women's exploitation.

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