**The Origins of Psychoanalysis**

Psychoanalysis originated in the writings of Sigmund Freud from the last decade of the 19th century and into the first decades of the 20th century. In its classical sense, psychoanalysis consists of theories and, more practically, techniques that are concerned with recognizing and handling, in various ways, the mental constraints of the analysand that arise from conflicts between his or her conscious and unconscious mind. This view of the field can engender a more structurally focussed discipline that makes use of narratives and analogies to gain an understanding of the self.

The birth of psychoanalysis was greatly influenced by Freud’s background as a neurologist, which made him acutely aware of the fact that there are mental processes that do not take place consciously. As such, psychoanalysis has its roots in diagnosis and treatment, which has bled into some schools of psychoanalytic literary criticism, such as the subset of psychoanalytic literary criticism that sees the text as revealing the unconscious mental processes of the author.

Psychoanalysis remained a field of popular medical interest through the first half of the 20th century and onward, with Freud’s initial theories beginning to be challenged and scrutinized even before his death. Other psychoanalysts, such as Carl Jung and, later, Jacques Lacan continued to add to the body of work that constituted the orthodoxy of psychoanalysis as it transitioned from a predominantly practical to a predominantly theoretical discipline. Jacques Lacan’s theories, in particular, were integral in establishing psychoanalysis as an important tool for literary criticism as they merged the ambiguity and multiplicity that would become prevalent in Derrida’s theoretical writings with many of the key tenets of classical psychoanalysis.

Today, psychoanalytic literary criticism makes use of Freud’s theories as well as Lacan’s revisions and deconstructions of those theories in order to form a powerful and productive tool for the analysis of texts.

**Brief Biographies on Key Contributors to Psychoanalysis**

**Sigmund Freud**

Sigmund Freud is commonly known as the father of psychoanalysis. Freud lived from 1836-1939. Much of his life was spent in Vienna where he went to school, started a family, worked as a doctor and set up a clinical practice for psychoanalysis. As a student, Freud initially studied biology and physiology. He specialized in neurology and received his medical degree in 1881. Soon after being married, Freud went to Paris for almost a year in which he carefully observed the French neurologist Jean Charcot who specialized in using hypnotism to treat patients. When Freud returned to Vienna he established his own clinical practice, he experimented with hypnosis however he found that it did not have long lasting effects. Instead, Freud developed the “talking cure”, a method of open dialogue with his patients in which they were encouraged to discuss any dreams, thoughts or ideas through “free association”. Through such therapeutic techniques, he established many of his theories. Dr. Freud published several books and essays on various topics such as dream interpretation, psychopathology and theories of sexuality. In 1923, Freud developed cancer of the jaw due to his excessive smoking. In 1930 after Nazi Germany annexed Austria, Freud was forced to flee to London to escape increased anti-Semitism. Although Freud’s conditions worsened, he continued to see patients until the time of his death in September of 1939.

**Jacques Lacan**

Jacques Lacan, is known as one of the most controversial psychoanalysts since Freud. He was born in Paris to a Catholic family, however, later in his life became atheist.  He studied psychiatry and worked in clinical psychiatric institutions. Lacan was elected to the SPP The Societe Psychanalytique de Paris. When the Naziz occupied France, the SPP was disbanded and Lacan severed in a military hospital in Paris during the war. one of Lacan’s most acclaimed work is his study on the “mirror phase” as formative of the “I”. After the war, In 1951 Lacan held weekly seminars on “the return to Freud” in which he defended the works of Freud. In 1953 Lacan left the SPP and created a sepreate group that was denied membership to the International Psychoanalytical association. In 1963, he founded *L'Ecole Freudienne de Paris* (EFP) in which he trained psychoanalysts. Lacan died in 1981.