



## THE CIVIL MASK CRACKS: FREUDIAN ECHOES IN THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

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### Abstract

This paper examines Guy de Maupassant's *The Diary of a Madman* through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis, with particular emphasis on the dynamic interaction between the id, ego, and superego. The analysis demonstrates how unconscious forces systematically overwhelm rational control within the protagonist, revealing the profound vulnerabilities inherent in the human psyche. By applying Freud's tripartite model of personality to the narrative, this study illuminates the psychological mechanisms underlying the judge's descent from respected authority figure to criminally insane individual. The research situates Maupassant's depiction of concealed madness within the broader cultural and philosophical context of fin-de-siècle France, arguing that his literary portrayal prefigures modern understandings of psychopathology and criminal deviance. This examination employs qualitative textual analysis to establish meaningful connections between psychological theory and narrative expression, thereby advancing interdisciplinary scholarship at the intersection of literature, psychoanalysis, and moral philosophy.

**Keywords:** *Ego, Freud, ID, Literary Psychology, Madness, Maupassant, Morality, Psychoanalysis, Psychopathology, Repression, Superego*

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Legacy and Literary Significance of Guy de Maupassant

Guy de Maupassant stands as one of the most influential literary figures of the nineteenth century, earning recognition as the progenitor of the modern short story form. Born in 1850 and dying in 1893, Maupassant's relatively brief life was marked by extraordinary creative productivity, yielding over 300 short stories, six novels, three travelogues, and numerous collections of poetry (Fong, 1970). His contributions to French literature extend beyond mere numerical prolixity; rather, his work represents a watershed moment in literary consciousness, wherein the careful observation of human psychology became elevated to an art form. Maupassant's particular genius lay in his ability to synthesize the demands of naturalism, the emerging literary movement of his era, with deeply psychological explorations of the human condition.

### 1.2. Biographical Influences and Artistic Development

The trajectory of Maupassant's creative life was substantially shaped by his personal experiences and psychological deterioration. His exposure to the Franco-Prussian War as a young man provided him with firsthand knowledge of violence, trauma, and the fragility of human dignity. More significantly, Maupassant's later struggles with neurosyphilis, chronic pain, paranoia, and eventual institutional confinement deeply informed his literary engagement with madness and psychological dissolution. Rather than presenting these conditions through a romanticized lens, Maupassant approached them with the unflinching realism characteristic of the naturalist movement. Researchers such as Poliquin (2010) and Showalter (1997) have documented how Maupassant's physical and mental deterioration paralleled his creation of increasingly disturbing psychological narratives. This biographical dimension adds considerable weight to the argument that *The Diary of a Madman* represents not merely imaginative speculation but rather an artistic transmutation of lived psychological experience.

### 1.3. The Diary of a Madman: Narrative Context and Publication

*The Diary of a Madman* was first published in the newspaper *Le Gaulois* on September 2, 1885, and subsequently appeared in numerous collections and editions throughout the French-speaking world. The narrative presents itself as a series of diary entries documenting the psychological and moral decline of an unnamed French judge of apparent respectability and social standing. This individual, who occupies a position of authority within the judicial system, harbors beneath his public persona a constellation of sadistic impulses and homicidal fantasies. The story traces his progression from entertaining dark thoughts to committing increasingly heinous acts, culminating in the murder of an innocent child whom he allows to take his place at the guillotine. The confessional nature of the diary format provides readers with unmediated access to the

protagonist's deteriorating consciousness, creating an effect of psychological immediacy that few literary works achieve.

#### **1.4. The Intersection of Literature and Psychoanalytic Theory**

The convergence of literary analysis and psychoanalytic theory represents a fertile ground for examining the mechanisms of psychological representation in fiction. Sigmund Freud's revolutionary model of the human psyche, articulated most comprehensively in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), posited the existence of three interconnected structural components: the id, representing primitive and instinctual desires; the ego, functioning as the mediating principle concerned with reality and social adaptation; and the superego, embodying internalized moral values and societal expectations. Freud's theoretical framework suggests that psychological disturbance emerges from the failure of the ego to maintain equilibrium between these competing forces. Literature, from this perspective, serves as a manifestation of unconscious processes, with fictional characters and narratives reflecting the internal conflicts that shape human behavior (Barry, 2009).

Maupassant's *The Diary of a Madman* emerges as a singularly appropriate text for Freudian analysis. The narrative arc describing the judge's descent into madness can be understood as the id's progressive conquest over both the ego and superego. His violence represents unchecked desire; his rationalizations illustrate the ego's desperate attempts to justify the unjustifiable; and the final shattering of moral constraint demonstrates the superego's ultimate failure to maintain its regulatory function. By bringing Freudian psychoanalytic theory into dialogue with Maupassant's narrative, this analysis transforms a work of psychological horror into a case study of personality disintegration, revealing the profound instability lurking beneath the surface of civil society.

## **2. Research Objectives and Questions**

### **2.1. Primary Research Objectives**

The overarching aim of this investigation is to elucidate the manner in which Freudian psychoanalytic theory illuminates the narrative dynamics and psychological content of Maupassant's *The Diary of a Madman*. More specifically, this research pursues three distinct but interconnected objectives. First, it examines the impact of Freud's structural model of personality on the characterization and psychological trajectory of the story's protagonist, demonstrating how the theory provides interpretive frameworks for understanding the judge's behaviour and motivation. Second, it explores the fundamental tension between individual psychological pathology and the demands of social conformity, arguing that Maupassant's narrative dramatizes the conflicts inherent in civilized existence. Third, it analyses the manner in which nineteenth-century French societal norms, institutional structures, and cultural values contribute to and potentially facilitate the protagonist's mental and moral disintegration.

### **2.2. Research Questions**

1. How does Freudian theory, especially the id, ego, and superego, explain the portrayal of madness and psychological deterioration in *The Diary of a Madman*?
2. In what ways does the protagonist maintain a facade of respectability and social status despite his underlying psychopathy and dangerous impulses?
3. How do the societal norms, judicial systems, and cultural attitudes of nineteenth-century France influence or intensify the character's mental disintegration?
4. What does Maupassant's depiction of hidden madness suggest about modern understandings of psychological illness and criminal behavior?

### **3. Literature Review and Theoretical Context**

#### **3.1. Psychoanalytic Approaches to Maupassant's Works**

Contemporary scholarship examining Maupassant's fiction through psychoanalytic lenses has demonstrated the productive potential of applying psychological theory to literary texts. Whereas earlier critical approaches often emphasized moral or symbolic dimensions of Maupassant's narratives, psychoanalytic interpretation reveals the subconscious drivers animating his characters' behavior and the repressed desires underlying conscious action (Mambrol, 2019). The critical consensus identifies Maupassant as a psychologically astute observer of human nature, whose artistic practice anticipates many insights that would later be formalized within psychoanalytic theory. His consistent exploration of the gap between public presentation and private reality prefigures Freud's central insight regarding the layered and often contradictory nature of the psyche. Sobandi, Elfiondri, and Dahlan (2020) have conducted detailed psychoanalytic examinations of *The Diary of a Madman*, emphasizing the protagonist's reliance on rationalization and displacement to manage his violent impulses. Their analysis documents how the judge systematically reframes his murders as expressions of natural law or philosophical principle, thereby allowing the conscious ego to tolerate actions that would ordinarily be condemnable. This defense mechanism operates precisely as Freud theorized: when prohibited desires cannot be consciously acknowledged, the psyche marshals elaborate justifications to preserve the illusion of moral consistency. Abbas and Anwar (2020) have extended this analysis to encompass the broader thematic preoccupation with Eros and Thanatos, the life-drive and death-drive, arguing that Maupassant's stories frequently dramatize the struggle between creative and destructive impulses, with the superego's failure to mediate these forces resulting in psychological catastrophe.

#### **3.2. Freud's Structural Model and Literary Analysis**

The tripartite model of personality developed by Freud (1923/1961) continues to provide a robust conceptual apparatus for interpreting internal conflict and psychological pathology in literary texts. For Barry (2017), literature functions as a privileged site where authors, often unconsciously, reveal their deepest fantasies, fears, and repressions. The

narrative becomes a kind of extended dream work, employing symbolic displacement and condensation to express that which cannot be directly articulated. Maupassant's short story exemplifies this process: the judge's homicidal impulses, which would be utterly unacceptable to his conscious mind, emerge through the narrative as philosophical musings on nature and social critique, allowing the author to explore forbidden desires while maintaining psychological distance.

McLeod (2023) emphasizes that the id, as Freud conceptualized it, operates without moral constraint or awareness of consequences, seeking immediate gratification of primitive urges. The ego, conversely, develops gradually through interaction with the external world, learning to delay gratification and navigate social reality. The superego, internalized through parental authority and cultural transmission, provides the voice of conscience and morality. When these three agencies function in relative harmony, the individual experiences psychological equilibrium and social functionality. However, when the superego proves insufficient to contain id impulses, or when the ego becomes compromised in its capacity to mediate, the result is neurosis, psychosis, or behavioral pathology.

### **3.3. Repression and the Return of the Repressed**

Central to psychoanalytic theory, and particularly relevant to Maupassant's narrative, is Freud's concept of repression. Repression functions as the foundational defense mechanism whereby unacceptable thoughts, feelings, and desires are pushed into the unconscious mind, removed from conscious awareness. Yet, as Freud consistently emphasized, repression is never complete or permanent. The repressed material possesses inherent psychic energy that continually presses toward conscious expression (Freud, 1930/2005). This pressure manifests in various ways: through neurotic symptoms, dreams, parapraxes (Freudian slips), and in some cases, through the breakdown of repressive barriers entirely. Maupassant's judge exemplifies this dynamic perfectly: the constraints of his judicial position and social respectability initially contain his violent and sadistic impulses, but these repressed desires eventually overcome the mechanisms of repression, resulting in overt criminal behavior.

### **3.4. The Judge as Prototype of Civilized Pathology**

What emerges from the literature is a recognition that Maupassant's anonymous judge serves as a prototype for the psychological pathologies endemic to civilized society itself. In his final major work, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930/2005), Freud argued that the price of civilization is the renunciation of instinct, enforced through intrapsychic repression. The very mechanisms that enable social organization and moral community simultaneously create psychological suffering and distorted symptomatology. The judge represents the ultimate expression of this civilizational paradox: his position as an arbiter of law requires him to embody rationality, morality, and restraint; yet these very

requirements intensify the repression of his primitive impulses, potentially contributing to their eventual explosive expression.

#### 4. Methodology

##### 4.1. Qualitative Research Design and Textual Analysis

This investigation employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing close textual analysis and intensive examination of narrative elements to interpret *The Diary of a Madman* through a Freudian psychoanalytic framework. Qualitative approaches, as distinguished from quantitative methodology, prioritize interpretive depth and contextual sensitivity over numerical measurement and statistical analysis. Textual analysis, as defined by Stolle (2022), constitutes a systematic examination of meanings contained within and generated by written texts, attending to how narrative structure, characterization, thematic patterns, and linguistic choices construct meaning. This method proves particularly appropriate for literary analysis, where the subtleties of language, symbolism, and narrative perspective carry significant interpretive weight.

Close reading, a complementary analytical practice, involves the sustained and repeated examination of textual passages to identify patterns, tensions, and interpretive possibilities that might be overlooked in more cursory approaches. This methodology encourages the analyst to move iteratively between the particular (individual sentences, images, and scenes) and the general (overarching themes and structural patterns), allowing for the gradual emergence of interpretive frameworks. For this analysis, close reading functions to identify textual markers corresponding to Freudian psychological concepts: expressions of id-driven desire, ego-mediated rationalization, and superego-generated guilt or constraint.

##### 4.2. Textual Selection and Contextual Framing

The selection of *The Diary of a Madman* as the primary object of analysis rests on several methodological considerations. First, the narrative's psychologically dense plot provides abundant material for psychological interpretation, with the protagonist's interior life constituting the primary focus throughout. Second, the diary format itself creates a narrative structure that mirrors the therapeutic relationship central to psychoanalysis, with the reader positioned as recipient of confessions and revelations. Third, the temporal dimension of the diary, with entries tracing the judge's psychological deterioration over time, permits analysis of how psychological defenses progressively fail. Fourth, Maupassant's own documented struggles with psychological illness lend biographical authenticity to the narrative's engagement with madness.

The analysis situates this text within the broader literary and historical context of fin-de-siècle France, attending to how the specific anxieties and preoccupations of the period inform the narrative's concerns. The Franco-Prussian War's aftermath, the growth of urban alienation, scientific advances in evolutionary theory and criminology, and

emerging psychiatric discourse all shaped the intellectual landscape within which Maupassant wrote. By contextualizing the analysis within these historical parameters, the study demonstrates how literature both reflects and contributes to cultural conversations about psychology, morality, and social order (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

## **5. Textual Analysis**

The Psychology of Nineteenth-Century France and Social Foundations of Pathology

### **5.1. National Trauma and Individual Pathology**

The nineteenth century in France was marked by profound social and psychological upheaval, much of which directly influenced Maupassant's literary representations of madness. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, experienced by Maupassant as a young man serving as a military clerk, constituted a traumatic rupture in French national consciousness. The military defeat, German occupation, and subsequent political turmoil left deep psychological scars across French society. Maupassant's direct exposure to the brutality of war, to human suffering and death on a massive scale, informed his subsequent artistic interrogation of violence and the fragility of civilized restraint. His literary engagement with crime, insanity, and psychological deterioration must be understood partially as an artistic working through of these national traumas.

Beyond the specific historical trauma of military defeat, nineteenth-century France experienced significant increases in documented crime, suicide, mental illness, and substance abuse (Artinian, 1969). These phenomena, which attracted considerable scientific and cultural attention, generated anxiety regarding the stability of the social order and the psychological health of the citizenry. Psychiatry, as an emerging discipline, attempted to categorize and explain these disturbing trends. The naturalist literary movement, to which Maupassant belonged, made the unflinching examination of these social pathologies a central artistic commitment. Rather than offering idealized or sentimental portraits, naturalist writers insisted on depicting human experience in its most raw and disturbing dimensions.

### **5.2. Judicial Authority and Moral Ambiguity**

The choice to make Maupassant's protagonist a judge deserves particular analytical attention. The judge occupies a unique position within social hierarchies: he is invested with authority to interpret and enforce the law, to determine guilt and innocence, to pronounce judgment and punishment. The judge thus embodies reason, morality, and the legitimate exercise of violence on behalf of the state. The position demands not merely intellectual capacity but profound moral integrity. When such a figure is revealed to harbor murderous impulses and sadistic fantasies, the revelation becomes doubly disturbing, implicating the entire judicial system and the presumed moral superiority of those who administer justice. Maupassant's narrative strategy thus attacks not merely an individual's

psychopathology but the hypocrisy and moral pretension inherent in established social institutions.

### **5.3. Hidden Madness Behind the Mask of Respectability**

#### **5.3.1. The Superego's Fragile Façade**

From the opening pages of the narrative, Maupassant establishes the profound disjunction between the judge's public presentation and private reality. The judge possesses all the external markers of respectability: his position within the judicial system, his education and refinement, his participation in acceptable society. Yet this respectable exterior functions as what might be termed a *superego façade*, a presentation maintained through effort and repression rather than constituting authentic moral being. The Freudian analysis reveals that respectability, for this character, represents not genuine moral development but rather the external performance demanded by social position.

This dynamic corresponds precisely with Freud's theoretical account of how the superego develops. The superego emerges through identification with parental authority and internalization of social values; it represents, in effect, the voice of society installed within the individual psyche. For the judge, respectability constitutes the internalized demands of his class, profession, and social station. However, beneath this superego façade, the id continues its relentless assertions of primitive desire. The diary entries increasingly reveal a mind preoccupied with violence, blood, and death. The judge's observations about execution, his fascination with methods of killing, his strange excitement at witnessing judicial proceedings all suggest the persistent pressure of repressed homicidal impulses. What distinguishes this narrative from more conventional psychological fiction is that the superego eventually loses its regulatory capacity entirely.

#### **5.3.2. The Erosion of Defense Mechanisms**

As the diary progresses, the narrative documents the systematic erosion of the psychological mechanisms through which the judge has previously contained his violent impulses. Initial entries reveal some preservation of the superego's authority; the judge expresses confusion and disturbance at his own thoughts, recognizing them as aberrant. This capacity for self-judgment, this internal voice condemning his own impulses, demonstrates the superego maintaining at least nominal control. However, this regulatory voice steadily weakens throughout the narrative.

The judge begins to construct *rationalized justifications* for his fantasies and eventual actions. He reflects on the naturalness of killing, on how death pervades nature, on how violence constitutes a fundamental principle of existence. These philosophical reflections function as ego-mediated rationalizations, permitting the conscious mind to entertain impulses that the superego would ordinarily condemn. The ego here operates in service to the id rather than in service to social adaptation and moral constraint. The judge's observations that "To make and to destroy!... Why... not intoxicating... kill?" articulate the

id's fundamental preoccupation with power, domination, and the transgressive pleasure of violating fundamental social prohibitions (Freud, 1923/1961). What emerges is a portrait of progressive superego collapse, wherein the internalized voice of moral restraint loses its power.

### 5.3.3. The Diary Format as Window into Unconscious Processes

#### Confession and Psychic Revelation

Maupassant's selection of the diary form proves methodologically brilliant from both literary and psychological perspectives. The diary, by its nature, invites confession and self-revelation; it provides a space for the expression of thoughts that the writer would never articulate in public discourse. In this sense, the diary mirrors the *psychoanalytic speaking cure*, wherein the analysand recounts associations, dreams, and repressed material to the analyst. The reader, positioned as witness to the diary entries, occupies a role analogous to the psychoanalyst, receiving the protagonist's confessions and attempting to discern the psychological dynamics at work beneath the surface of conscious discourse. Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes that conscious thoughts are frequently defensive in nature; the ego and superego work to distort, deny, or displace threatening material before it reaches consciousness. Dreams, slips of the tongue, and free associations provide more direct access to unconscious processes. The diary format functions similarly: the judge's unguarded thoughts, recorded without the constraints of public discourse, reveal psychological material less filtered by defensive operations. His reflections on beauty and ugliness, on nature and civilization, on the hierarchy of human worth, all reveal the philosophical scaffolding through which his id impulses construct justifications for themselves.

### 5.3.4. The Progression of Confessed Desire

The temporal structure of the diary permits analysis of how unconscious impulses progress from fantasy toward actualization. The early entries present the judge as preoccupied with violent fantasies but not yet acting upon them. He observes executions with intense fascination, noticing details of violence and death that others apparently overlook. He muses on philosophical questions regarding human nature and morality. These entries reveal the id's desires pressing at the boundaries of repression but still contained within fantasy. The superego, though weakened, maintains sufficient control to prevent action.

However, as the diary continues, the boundary between fantasy and action dissolves. The judge moves from observing executions to inflicting violence himself. His initial victim is a bird, an act he can perhaps rationalize as insignificant. Yet the killing provides gratification, confirming his theory that violence can be experienced as beautiful and pleasurable. Subsequently, he progresses to the murder of a human being. The careful documentation of these acts, the pride and pleasure expressed in the commission of

murder, indicates complete superego collapse. The judge no longer experiences guilt or constraint; the id operates without mediation or opposition from moral agency.

#### **5.4. Paranoia, Guilt, and Psychological Breakdown**

##### **5.4.1. The Paranoid Dimension**

Accompanying the judge's descent into overt criminality is the emergence of paranoid ideation. The judge becomes increasingly preoccupied with the possibility that others might discover his crimes, that his respectable exterior might be penetrated and his true nature revealed. This paranoia, while seemingly reasonable given his actual guilt, takes on a more diffuse character, suggesting broader disturbance in his relationship to reality and social perception. Freud (1930/2005) theorized that repression and guilt frequently generate paranoid symptoms, wherein unconscious aggression becomes transformed into the belief that others harbor hostile intentions toward oneself.

The judge's paranoia serves a defensive function: it externalizes his internal conflict, projecting outward the condemnation that his superego can no longer articulate. Rather than experiencing guilt as an internal psychological state, he experiences the external world as threatening and potentially accusatory. This dynamic becomes particularly evident in his preoccupation with alienist physicians, his fear that they might penetrate his carefully maintained disguise. The narrative structure itself incorporates this paranoid dimension, as the judge apparently addresses his diary to an audience whose discovery he both fears and perhaps unconsciously desires.

##### **5.4.2. Guilt and the Breakdown of Denial**

Beneath the paranoid surface lies profound guilt, the voice of the superego reasserting itself even as the judge has abandoned moral restraint in action. The diary reveals a character simultaneously proud of his crimes and tormented by awareness of their illegality and immorality. This ambivalence, this coexistence of defiant transgression and guilty conscience, reflects the psychic conflict that has never been fully resolved. The judge has acted upon his id impulses, demonstrating that the superego cannot ultimately prevent behavior; yet the superego continues to exert psychological pressure, generating the guilt and paranoia that increasingly dominate his consciousness.

The narrative's progression toward institutional confinement may be read as the external world's enforcement of the superego function that the individual has failed to maintain. The alibi that the judge constructs, allowing an innocent person to be executed in his stead, represents the ego's ultimate compromise formation, attempting to maintain the judge's liberty while simultaneously accepting punishment through his guilt. Even as he has violated law and morality, he remains subject to their force.

#### **5.5. The Thanatos Drive and Death Imagery**

##### **5.5.1. Freud's Death Drive and Maupassant's Violence**

A significant dimension of the judge's psychology concerns his apparent eroticization of death and violence. The repeated imagery of blood, of heads severed by the guillotine, of death's varied manifestations, all suggest a deep investment in what Freud termed Thanatos, the death drive. Whereas Eros represents the drive toward life, unity, and reproduction, Thanatos encompasses aggression, destruction, and the fundamental human pull toward death and entropy. Maupassant's judge finds aesthetic and sensual pleasure in contemplating violence and death, experiencing states approximating arousal when witnessing executions or inflicting harm.

Abbas and Anwar (2020) have emphasized that Maupassant's fiction frequently explores the tension between Eros and Thanatos, dramatizing the struggle between creative and destructive impulses. The judge, however, represents an extreme case where the death drive achieves ascendancy, where destruction becomes the primary source of psychological gratification. His reflections that "How fine it is to see the blood flow!" and his aesthetic appreciation of the "rose-colored blood" suggest a profound perversion of normal psychological functioning, wherein the pleasure principle has attached itself entirely to images and acts of destruction.

#### **5.5.2. Sadism and the Torture Impulse**

The judge's psychology displays unmistakable sadistic dimensions. He derives pleasure not merely from killing but from the infliction of suffering, from witnessing agony and the struggle against death. His rationalizations about which methods of execution constitute the most interesting, his speculation about the experience of the condemned, all reveal a sadistic preoccupation with the other's suffering. Psychoanalytic theory understands sadism as a manifestation of aggression that has become eroticized, wherein the infliction of pain generates libidinal gratification.

The narrative suggests that this sadism emerges from the very conditions of the judge's apparently respectable life. The requirement to maintain judicial impartiality, to observe violence and suffering without emotional expression or participation, may create a perverse psychological economy wherein these denied feelings accumulate and eventually demand discharge. The distance between himself and the condemned individuals he sentences, the position of authority and power, the exposure to human suffering all occur within a framework that prohibits authentic emotional engagement. Maupassant's implicit analysis suggests that such psychological repression inevitably generates pathological returns.

### **5.6. Morality Versus Instinct: The Superego's Final Defeat**

#### **5.6.1. Rationalization as a Defensive Operation**

The judge's repeated rationalizations for his crimes deserve careful analytical attention, as they reveal the ego's complicity in the id's gratification. When he murders an innocent individual and allows another to take his place at the guillotine, the judge engages

in elaborate philosophical justification. He argues that all deaths are essentially equivalent, that his victim was unexceptional, that the condemned man's execution was inevitable regardless of his specific identity. These rationalizations permit the conscious ego to tolerate behavior that would ordinarily provoke overwhelming guilt and self-condemnation.

This dynamic reflects what psychoanalytic theory identifies as *compromise formation*, a psychological structure through which conflicting impulses achieve partial expression. The superego cannot accept the impulse to murder; the id demands gratification of aggressive and destructive urges. The compromise formation permits the id's expression through action while the ego constructs philosophical justifications that allow the conscious mind to avoid full acknowledgment of the acts' true moral significance. Yet such compromises are inherently unstable, generating the very paranoia and guilt that increasingly preoccupy the judge's consciousness.

#### **5.6.2. The Collapse of Moral Authority**

As the narrative progresses, the judge's capacity for rationalization gradually fails to contain his guilt. The philosophical frameworks through which he has attempted to justify his crimes prove insufficient. His own diary entries reveal increasing confusion and disturbance, suggesting that the superego, though incapable of preventing action, continues to assert itself through psychological suffering. The judge has achieved the id's gratification but at the cost of profound psychological deterioration. His respectable exterior deteriorates as his internal conflict becomes more acute.

The narrative's conclusion, in which alienist physicians pronounce the judge mad and presumably subject him to institutional confinement, represents the external enforcement of moral and legal constraints that he has internally violated. His fall from respectability to recognized madness symbolizes the ultimate failure of the superego to maintain the fiction of civilized stability. The "civil mask," as the paper's title indicates, "cracks" under the pressure of repressed impulses that will not remain contained.

### **5.7. Social Hypocrisy and the Institutional Dimension**

#### **5.7.1. Respectability as Social Performance**

Beyond the individual psychological dimensions of the judge's pathology, Maupassant's narrative implicates the broader social structures and institutions that facilitate and conceal such pathology. The judge's ability to maintain his respectable position despite his crimes suggests a social order fundamentally invested in appearance over substance, in maintaining the illusion of moral community regardless of actual moral reality. The society depicted in the narrative seems profoundly invested in not knowing what lies beneath respectable surfaces.

This critique extends Maupassant's social vision beyond individual psychology to encompass institutional hypocrisy. The judicial system that the judge represents is revealed

as invested in the appearance of justice and morality rather than in the achievement of these ends. The condemned man executed in the judge's stead receives no justice; an innocent person is destroyed in his place. The legal apparatus ostensibly designed to protect society and maintain order becomes instead an instrument through which the criminal conceals his crimes and escapes accountability. Maupassant's narrative thus indicts not merely individual pathology but social structures that simultaneously demand the repression of instinct and provide the power to violate those very demands.

#### **5.7.2. Civilization's Complicity in Madness**

In his later theoretical work, particularly *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud, 1930/2005), Freud explored how the repressive demands of civilization generate psychological suffering and symptomatology. Maupassant's narrative dramatizes this theoretical insight, suggesting that the very conditions of civilization—the requirement to maintain respectability, to sublimate aggression into socially acceptable forms, to accept authority and restraint—simultaneously create the psychological pressure that eventually erupts in violence and madness. The judge's crimes emerge not despite his civilized status but potentially because of it; the intensity of repression required to maintain his respectable position may contribute to the violent character of the eventual discharge.

### **5.8. Discussion: Implications and Broader Significance**

#### **5.8.1. The Judge as Exemplar of Civilized Pathology**

The analysis presented here suggests that Maupassant's anonymous judge functions as more than a mere individual case study; rather, he emerges as an exemplar of pathological possibilities inherent in civilized social organization. His apparently exceptional criminality and madness reflect extreme manifestations of processes that, to some degree, characterize all individuals existing within repressive social structures. The gap between public persona and private desire, the reliance on rationalization and denial, the pressure of repressed impulses seeking expression, the fragility of superego control under sufficient stress—these elements characterize not merely the exceptional psychopath but potentially all civilized beings.

This interpretation aligns with the cautionary conclusion of Maupassant's narrative, wherein alienist physicians warn that many madmen exist undetected within society, concealing their pathology beneath respectability. The implication proves deeply unsettling: madness is not an exceptional condition afflicting discrete individuals but a potential that resides within civilized society itself, constantly pressing against the thin barriers of repression and social constraint. The judge's crimes, while extraordinary in their brutality, emerge from psychological dynamics that possess universal relevance.

#### **5.8.2. Literary Representation and Psychological Realism**

Maupassant's achievement in *The Diary of a Madman* lies partially in his refusal to present madness through the lens of sentimentality or supernatural explanation. Unlike

some contemporary gothic fiction that attributes psychological disturbance to external supernatural forces, Maupassant grounds his narrative entirely in psychological realism. The judge's madness emerges from the internal dynamics of his psyche, from the failure of ordinary psychological mechanisms to contain his aggression and maintain his civilized pretense. This commitment to psychological realism anticipates modern psychiatric and psychoanalytic approaches, which likewise reject external or supernatural explanations in favor of investigation into intrapsychic dynamics.

Furthermore, Maupassant's narrative structure, with its diary format providing direct access to the protagonist's consciousness, represents an innovative literary technique for representing psychological states. Later writers, particularly those associated with modernism and post-modern movements, would develop similar techniques to provide readers with unprecedented access to characters' interior lives. In this sense, *The Diary of a Madman* contributes to literary history through its formal innovations, demonstrating how narrative structure itself can function as a vehicle for psychological representation.

### 5.8.3. Comparative Literary Dimensions

The analysis of Maupassant's work gains additional depth when placed in relation to other psychological narratives of the period. Maupassant's contemporary Robert Louis Stevenson, in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), likewise explores the split between respectable public presentation and hidden transgressive desire. However, Stevenson employs a supernatural mechanism, a potion enabling the literal splitting of consciousness. Maupassant's judge requires no such external mechanism; his dual nature emerges from ordinary psychological processes. Similarly, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* presents a narrator whose guilt over murder manifests in auditory hallucinations. While Poe emphasizes the supernatural or borderline supernatural character of the protagonist's psychological experience, Maupassant insists on the naturalistic explanation of all phenomena through psychological processes.

These comparative observations suggest that Maupassant occupies a particular position within literary history, representing a commitment to psychological realism that presages modern psychiatric approaches while maintaining the narrative power of darker literary traditions. His refusal of supernatural explanation, his insistence that madness emerges from comprehensible psychological mechanisms, places him closer to modern conceptions of psychopathology than some of his contemporaries.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Synthesis and Theoretical Integration

This analysis of Guy de Maupassant's *The Diary of a Madman* has demonstrated the productive application of Freudian psychoanalytic theory to literary interpretation. Through systematic examination of the narrative structure, characterization, and thematic content, the paper has argued that the judge's descent into madness emerges precisely as

Freudian theory would predict: as the progressive failure of the superego and ego to contain id impulses, resulting in the eruption of unconscious desires into overt behavior. The judge's trajectory from respectable authority figure to recognized madman exemplifies the psychological dynamics through which repression becomes increasingly unstable and eventually fails altogether.

The narrative reveals how superficial respectability masks profound psychological disturbance, how the maintenance of civilized personas requires the constant repression of primitive impulses, and how the barriers containing such repression remain perpetually vulnerable to breach. The diary format permits readers unprecedented access to this internal psychological drama, creating an effect of psychological immediacy that few literary works achieve. In this sense, Maupassant anticipates modern psychoanalytic and psychiatric approaches that insist on attending carefully to the phenomenology of psychological disturbance.

### **6.2. Broader Cultural and Philosophical Implications**

Beyond its specific textual analysis, this study contributes to broader conversations regarding the relationship between literature and psychology, between artistic representation and psychological theory. The convergence of Maupassant's intuitive psychological acuity and Freud's theoretical framework demonstrates how literary texts frequently contain insights that psychoanalytic theory subsequently formalizes. Writers, working from lived experience and imaginative projection rather than systematic theory, often grasp fundamental truths about human psychology before these insights achieve academic formalization.

Furthermore, the analysis illustrates how close attention to literary narrative can deepen theoretical understanding. The specific representations of rationalization, paranoia, and superego collapse that Maupassant creates add texture and complexity to abstract theoretical propositions. Theory and literature become mutually illuminating, each providing resources for understanding the other.

### **6.3. Historical Moment and Psychological Consciousness**

The publication of *The Diary of a Madman* in 1885, a mere two years before Freud would present his preliminary psychoanalytic theories, places Maupassant's work at a crucial juncture in the history of psychological consciousness. The late nineteenth century witnessed increasing scientific and cultural attention to psychological phenomena, to the investigation of mental illness and the exploration of consciousness. Maupassant's literary engagement with these concerns contributes to this broader cultural conversation, offering artistic representations of psychological dynamics that theory would subsequently attempt to systematize.

### **6.4. Enduring Relevance and Contemporary Application**

The disturbing conclusions of Maupassant's narrative, suggesting that undetected madness pervades civilized society, retains considerable contemporary relevance. Modern societies, despite advances in psychiatric knowledge and treatment, continue to struggle with the reality of concealed pathology, of individuals whose public presentation masks dangerous or destructive tendencies. The narrative serves as a warning against excessive faith in the reliability of surface appearances, against the presumption that respectability necessarily indicates psychological health or moral integrity.

Moreover, the analysis contributes to contemporary discussions regarding the relationship between individual psychology and social structure. The suggestion that particular social institutions may contribute to the intensification of psychological disturbance, that respectability itself may generate the very pathologies it ostensibly prevents, raises important questions for modern societies. The judge's crimes emerge not entirely from individual pathology but from the interaction between his psychological disposition and the social structures within which he exists. This observation suggests that comprehensive approaches to psychological disturbance must attend not merely to individual treatment but to the social conditions fostering pathology.

## 7. Future Research Directions

This analysis opens multiple avenues for future research. Comparative examination of Maupassant's other psychological narratives, particularly *The Horla* and *He?* could further elucidate his literary preoccupation with mental disintegration and paranoia. Cross-cultural and transnational analysis comparing Maupassant's representations of madness with those of contemporary writers in other national literatures could illuminate cultural variations in psychological consciousness during the fin-de-siècle period. Furthermore, engagement with more contemporary psychoanalytic theories, beyond Freud's foundational work, could provide additional theoretical frameworks for literary analysis.

### 7.1. Final Reflection

Ultimately, Maupassant's *The Diary of a Madman* emerges as a profound meditation on human vulnerability, on the fragility of the psychological structures through which individuals maintain civilized existence. The narrative insists that beneath respectable surfaces lurk depths of primitive desire, repressed aggression, and psychological disturbance. The civil mask, as the paper's title proclaims, "cracks" under sufficient pressure, revealing the madness that civilization simultaneously requires and generates. Through sustained psychological analysis grounded in Freudian theory, this examination has revealed the narrative's sophisticated engagement with questions of fundamental importance: How stable is the human psyche? How secure are the social structures constraining violence and transgression? What exactly lies beneath the surfaces of respectability that we present to the world? These questions, raised by Maupassant more

than a century ago, continue to disturb and challenge readers today, attesting to the enduring psychological and philosophical significance of his literary vision.

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