

Educational Values in the Psycho-Spiritual Journey of Repentance: A Freudian Psychoanalytic Reading of Abu Nuwas's "Al-I'tiraf" (Īlāhī lastu lil-firdawsi ahlan)

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 02 Juli 2026

Revised: 16 Agustus 2026

Accepted: 1 September 2026

KEYWORDS

educational values; psychoanalytic literary criticism; psychology of literature; Sigmund Freud; Abu Nuwas; Al-I'tiraf; moral education; catharsis; sublimation

HOW TO CITE

Wahyudin, Suaib, Z., & Khotijah. (20XX). Educational values in the psycho-spiritual journey of repentance: A Freudian psychoanalytic reading of Abu Nuwas's "Al-I'tiraf" (Īlāhī lastu lil-firdawsi ahlan). *Educational Review: Research and Innovation (ERRI)*, Volume(Issue), page range. <https://doi.org/10.xxxxx/erri.vXiX.xxx>

ABSTRACT

This study examines the educational values embedded in the psycho-spiritual dynamics of "Al-I'tiraf" ("Īlāhī lastu lil-firdawsi ahlan"), the celebrated penitential poem attributed to the Abbasid poet Abu Nuwas (756–814 CE), through the lens of psychoanalytic literary criticism grounded in Sigmund Freud's theory of the psyche. Although the poem is widely received as a devotional text of confession and repentance, its six stanzas encode both a complex psychodynamic progression—in which moral self-reproach, primordial fear of punishment, and the yearning for spiritual equilibrium interact—and a coherent set of educational values: self-awareness, honesty in self-assessment, emotional regulation, moral responsibility, humility, and resilience of hope. Employing a qualitative library research design, the study integrates close reading with qualitative content analysis and hermeneutic interpretation to map Freudian constructs—the id, ego, and superego; topographic layers of consciousness; anxiety; defense mechanisms; catharsis; sublimation; and the dual drives of Eros and Thanatos—onto the poem's stanzaic movement, while identifying the educational value carried by each psychodynamic stage. The findings show that the poem dramatizes a complete intrapsychic arc—the ego's paralysis between the superego's condemnation and the id's terror; the cathartic discharge of repressed guilt through confession; the raising of unconscious memories into awareness; a confrontation with Thanatos as life-time diminishes while sin accumulates; and the collapse of ego-omnipotence into surrender before the Divine—through which neurotic guilt is transmuted into constructive faith and psychic homeostasis is restored. Each stage yields a distinct educational value for character and moral education. The poem thus functions not merely as religious verse but as a literary enactment of psychological healing and as a durable medium of moral education, offering enduring insight into repentance as both an intrapsychic and pedagogical process.

1. INTRODUCTION

Poetry is among the most psychologically concentrated forms of human expression, and simultaneously among the oldest media of education. Because it compresses emotion, memory, and desire into rhythmically patterned language, the poem has long been regarded as a privileged site where the hidden architecture of the psyche becomes legible—and where values are transmitted less by precept than by imaginative identification. The discipline that investigates this intersection is the psychology of literature, an interdisciplinary field concerned with the psychological processes of literary creation, the psychic content of literary works, and the emotional effects of literature on readers (Wellek & Warren, 1949). Within this field, psychoanalytic criticism—one of the most enduring critical traditions of the twentieth century—applies the concepts of Sigmund Freud, above all the unconscious, the structural model of id–ego–superego, repression, anxiety, and sublimation, to the interpretation of literary texts (Barry, 2017; Niaz et al., 2019). Such criticism is, at bottom, an educational enterprise: to render the unconscious dynamics of a text visible is to train the reader's capacity for self-knowledge, the founding discipline of all moral education.

Classical Arabic literature provides an exceptionally rich object for such inquiry. Abu Nuwas (756–814 CE / 140–199 AH), the great poet of the early Abbasid court, was renowned for a poetic persona marked by wine, wit, and transgression; yet his legacy also includes a celebrated corpus of *zuhdiyyāt*, ascetic and penitential poems in which the aging poet turns from pleasure toward mortality, judgment, and divine mercy (Ananda, 2023). The most famous of these is the short poem known by its opening line, "Ilāhī lastu lil-firdawsī ahlan" ("My God, I am not worthy of Paradise"), commonly titled *Al-I'tiraf* ("The Confession"). In the Arab and wider Muslim world—and especially in Indonesia, where its verses are sung as a post-adhan hymn—the poem has acquired an afterlife far beyond its historical moment, functioning as a communal language of contrition (Fahrizal & Tasnimah, 2022). In pedagogical terms, this afterlife is significant: the poem operates as an informal but powerful instrument of moral and character education, shaping learners' attitudes toward sin, repentance, humility, and hope through repeated affective exposure rather than through didactic instruction.

Within scholarship, *Al-I'tiraf* has been approached from several angles: the philosophy of language (Ananda, 2023), Riffaterrean semiotics, which identifies the poem's matrix as the servant's hope and its hypogram in Q. al-Anbiyā' 87 and a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim (Nashihah, 2024), lexical semantics (Fitrah, 2024), metaphor and simile (Khalilah, 2025), and comparative intertextuality with contemporary Indonesian song lyrics (Fahrizal & Tasnimah, 2022). Remarkably, however, virtually no study has read the poem through Freudian psychoanalysis, despite the fact that its content—confession of unworthiness, terror of hellfire, an unconscious "counted" burden of sin, awareness of diminishing life, and final surrender—maps almost one-to-one onto Freud's clinical topography of moral conflict, repression, anxiety, and their resolution (Freud, 1923/1961, 1926/1959). Nor has any study systematically asked what educational values this psychodynamic structure carries—what, precisely, the poem teaches about the management of guilt, the acceptance of finitude, and the education of desire.

This study addresses both gaps. Its research questions are: (1) how do Freudian psychoanalytic constructs operate within the stanzaic structure of *Al-I'tiraf*, and (2) what educational values are encoded in, and conveyed by, each stage of the poem's represented psychodynamic process? By situating a canonical work of Arabic devotional verse within psychoanalytic literary theory and the discourse of educational values, the study aims to contribute to scholarship that reads Islamic literary texts through psychological frameworks (Tarzian et al., 2023), and to demonstrate that Freud's model of the mind—though developed in a clinical setting—retains heuristic value for interpreting the spiritual psychology and the pedagogical content of pre-modern poetry (Ekström, 2004).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 *The Psychology of Literature and the Educational Value of Literary Texts*

The psychology of literature investigates the psychological dimensions of literature at three related sites: the creative process of the author, the psychic reality represented within the work, and the reader's affective response. Wellek and Warren (1949), in their landmark *Theory of Literature*, systematized the extrinsic study of literature—including psychology—while cautioning that psychological explanation should illuminate, never replace, the intrinsic analysis of the literary work itself. Abrams (1953), in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, located psychological approaches within the expressive orientation, in which the work is understood as the projection of the author's emotions and imagination, as well as the pragmatic orientation, in which literature is designed to arouse emotion and transform the reader's attitudes—an effect closely related to catharsis. Later handbooks consolidated psychoanalytic criticism as a practical method, using Freudian concepts to interpret character motivation, symbolic action, and narrative conflict (Guerin et al., 1979; Barry, 2017).

For the present study, the pragmatic orientation is decisive: a poem that stages the education of a soul—from denial and fear through confession to reconciliation—educates its reader by mimesis. The educational values of such a text are therefore not an ornament added to its psychological content but are inseparable from it. In the tradition of value theory in Islamic educational scholarship, a literary text educates through what it habituates: honesty (*sidq*) in self-assessment, humility (*tawāḍuʿ*) before the limits of the self, responsibility for one's moral record, and resilient hope (*rajāʾ*) anchored not in self-sufficiency but in the mercy of the Divine. A psychoanalytic reading makes these values visible at the level of psychic mechanism rather than only at the level of doctrine.

2.2 Freudian Psychoanalysis as a Literary Method

Freud's psychoanalytic theory rests on the premise that mental life is largely determined by processes outside conscious awareness (Freud, 1915/1957). In his topographic model, the psyche is divided into the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious—the last a reservoir of repressed wishes, memories, and moral transgressions that continue to exert pressure on conscious life. In his later structural model, personality is organized around three agencies: the id, the repository of instinctual drives governed by the pleasure principle; the superego, the internalized moral authority that judges and punishes; and the ego, the rational agency that mediates between id, superego, and external reality (Freud, 1923/1961; Tarzian et al., 2023). Anxiety arises when the ego is threatened—by external danger (realistic anxiety), by impulses from the id (neurotic anxiety), or by the superego's condemnation (moral anxiety) (Freud, 1926/1959).

Because repressed material cannot simply be willed away, the ego deploys defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, rationalization, regression, and sublimation (Freud, 1894/1962). Sublimation is of particular importance for literary studies: in it, the energy of an unacceptable impulse is redirected into socially valued creation, so that artistic production itself becomes a means of transforming and discharging psychic tension (Freud, 1908/1959). Closely related is catharsis, the discharge of accumulated affect—first described in the Breuer–Freud cathartic method and echoed in Freud's account of mourning, in which painful emotion is gradually worked through rather than endlessly repeated (Freud, 1917/1957). Finally, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920/1955) posited two fundamental drives: Eros, the life-preserving and binding drive, and Thanatos, the death drive that inclines organisms toward dissolution—a framework that lends itself naturally to the analysis of religious poetry preoccupied with mortality and salvation (Niaz et al., 2019).

Psychoanalytic literary criticism applies these constructs in two principal ways: the analysis of characters or poetic personae as case studies of psychic conflict, and the reading of the text's symbols, images, and structures as transformations of unconscious material (Guerin et al., 1979). The present study adopts the persona-based approach, treating the confessing "I" of *Al-I'tiraf* as a literary subject whose stanzaic utterance traces a coherent intrapsychic trajectory—and, at each station of that trajectory, models a specific educational value for the reader who follows it.

3. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design using library research (documentary analysis). The primary data consisted of the Arabic text of the six canonical stanzas of Al-I'tiraf together with published English and Indonesian translations (Ananda, 2023; Nashihah, 2024). Secondary data comprised Freud's major psychoanalytic works in the Standard Edition and scholarly literature on the psychology of literature, psychoanalytic criticism, and educational values.

Data collection proceeded through systematic documentation (Hikmawati, 2020): (1) close reading of the poem in the original Arabic and in translation; (2) inventory of key diction indicating psychodynamic phenomena—self-unworthiness ("lastu lil-firdawsi ahlan"), fear of fire ("wa-lā aqwā 'alā nār al-jahīm"), the sand simile ("mithlu a'dād al-rimāl"), diminishing life ("umrī nāqīṣ"), accumulated sin ("dhanbī zā'id"), and surrender ("abduka al-'aṣī atāka"); (3) coding of each stanza under two parallel categories—the relevant Freudian constructs (structural conflict, anxiety, defense mechanisms, drive theory, catharsis, sublimation) and the educational value manifested at that stage; and (4) interpretive synthesis of the poem as a sequential psychic and pedagogical process. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis integrated with hermeneutic interpretation, in which each stanza was first explicated textually, then interpreted against the Freudian framework, and finally evaluated for its educational value (Sugiyono, 2016; Syahza, 2021). To enhance trustworthiness, interpretations were triangulated against at least two independent scholarly readings of the poem's meaning (Nashihah, 2024; Ananda, 2023) and checked for internal consistency across stanzas.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The six stanzas of Al-I'tiraf are presented below in transliteration and English translation, followed by a psychoanalytic reading of each—with the educational value carried by each psychodynamic stage made explicit—and a synthesis of the poem's overall psychodynamic and pedagogical arc.

Stanza 1

Ilāhī lastu lil-firdawsi ahlan / wa-lā aqwā 'alā nār al-jahīm

"My God, I am not worthy of Paradise, / and I cannot bear the Fire of Hell."

Stanza 2

Fa-hab lī tawbatan wa-ghfir dhunūbī / fa-innaka ghāfir al-dhanb al-'aẓīm

"Grant me repentance and forgive my sins, / for You are the Forgiver of the greatest sin."

Stanza 3

Dhunūbī mithlu a'dād al-rimāl / fa-hab lī tawbatan yā dhā al-jalāl

"My sins are like the number of grains of sand; / grant me repentance, O Lord of Majesty."

Stanza 4

Wa-'umrī nāqīṣ fī kullī yawm / wa-dhanbī zā'id, kayfa ihtimālī?

"My life decreases with every day, / while my sin increases; how can I bear it?"

Stanza 5

Ilāhī 'abduka al-'aṣī atāka / muqirran bi-dh-dhunūb wa-qad da'āka

"My God, Your disobedient servant comes to You, / confessing his sins and calling upon You."

Stanza 6

Fa-in taghfir fa-anta li-dhāka abl / wa-in taṭrud fa-man narjū sinwāka?

"If You forgive, You are worthy of that; / and if You drive me away, in whom shall I hope besides You?"

4.1 Stanza 1: Confession of Unworthiness, the Tripartite Conflict, and the Educational Value of Honest Self-Assessment

The opening stanza performs, in psychoanalytic terms, a direct verbalization of structural conflict. The speaker simultaneously concedes moral disqualification ("lastu lil-firdawsi ahlan") and affective incapacity ("wa-lā aqwā 'alā nār al-jahīm"). In Freudian terms, the first clause is the voice of the superego: the internalized moral judge that inventories the subject's transgressions and issues a verdict of unworthiness, thereby producing moral anxiety and depressive self-judgment (Freud, 1923/1961). The second clause, by contrast, is the voice of the id: the organism's primordial recoil from pain, expressing neurotic anxiety in the face of anticipated punishment (Freud, 1926/1959).

Between these two agencies stands the ego, and the stanza captures its characteristic predicament. The ego receives an indictment from the superego that it cannot rebut, while receiving from the id a terror it cannot dismiss. The result is the ego's partial paralysis: the subject can neither claim Paradise (the reality principle forbids the fantasy of merit) nor accept Hell (the id refuses suffering). This double bind is precisely the configuration Freud described in which the ego, "a poor creature owing service to three masters," is caught between external reality, instinctual demand, and moral command (Freud, 1923/1961, p. 56). Read psychoanalytically, the stanza is not a formulaic preamble of humility but an exact dramatization of the intrapsychic tribunal in session—confession ('itirāf) as the ego's acknowledgment that the conflict can no longer be managed by denial or repression alone (Tarzian et al., 2023).

The educational value of this stanza is the discipline of honest self-assessment. In moral education, the first and often evaded step is the accurate perception of one's own moral standing—neither inflated by self-love nor paralyzed by terror. The poem models this accuracy: the speaker neither excuses himself (ego-defense) nor exaggerates his hope of reward (id-fantasy). For learners, the stanza teaches that self-knowledge precedes self-improvement: an education that begins in flattery of the self produces no repentance, while one that begins in lucid acknowledgment of limitation opens the possibility of change.

4.2 Stanza 2: The Plea for Pardon, Psychic Equilibrium, and the Educational Value of Constructive Hope

The second stanza marks the poem's first turn from diagnosis to petition: "Grant me repentance and forgive my sins, / for You are the Forgiver of the greatest sin." Structurally, the stanza depicts the ego's resumption of its executive function. No longer paralyzed, the ego initiates negotiation with the superego and reality: instead of awaiting condemnation, it actively seeks the one sanction—divine pardon—that can release the psychic system from its deadlock (Freud, 1923/1961).

Two psychodynamic operations are visible here. First, the appeal for forgiveness functions as a cathartic discharge. Accumulated psychic energy bound up in guilt is expressed in language and directed toward an addressee capable of receiving it; this is structurally homologous to the talking cure, in which verbalized affect loses its pathogenic force (Freud, 1917/1957). Second, the second hemistich—affirming that God forgives even the gravest sin—performs a defensive operation of the highest order: it reassures the id (hellfire can be averted), mollifies the superego (the offense is forgivable), and licenses the ego to hope. The stanza thus describes a movement toward homeostasis, the lowering of psychic tension that Freud regarded as the governing economic aim of mental life (Freud, 1920/1955). The poem's well-known emotional calming effect on its reciters—attested by its liturgical afterlife in Indonesian mosques and pesantren (Fahrizal & Tasnimah, 2022)—mirrors on the side of the reader the intrapsychic relief enacted in the text.

The educational value of this stanza is constructive hope grounded in realism. Pedagogically, the stanza distinguishes hope from wish-fulfilling fantasy: the speaker does not imagine that his sins are small; he imagines that mercy is greater. This is the difference between denial and trust. In character education, the stanza teaches that the honest acknowledgment of failure (stanza 1) must be followed by an appeal for transformation, not by despair or by minimization of the fault—a lesson directly transferable to any restorative model of discipline in schools.

4.3 Stanza 3: The Sand of the Shore, Repressed Guilt, and the Educational Value of Facing One's Past

The third stanza's celebrated simile—sins "like the number of grains of sand"—has been studied semantically as hyperbole (Khalilah, 2025) and as a marker of the servant's hope in Riffaterrean analysis (Nashihah, 2024). A Freudian reading adds a topographic dimension. The simile quantifies a mass of repressed material: offenses that have sunk into the unconscious, where they remain active yet uncountable, like sand beneath water (Freud, 1915/1957). The speaker cannot enumerate his sins; he can only gesture toward their uncountability—an accurate phenomenology of repression, in which the repressed is known by its effects (guilt, dread) rather than by conscious recall.

The stanza also dramatizes the lifting of repression. The movement from the sand image to the direct petition ("grant me repentance, O Lord of Majesty") traces the passage of material from the unconscious, through the preconscious where it is formulated in metaphor, into conscious speech—the very itinerary of analytic insight. In Freudian terms, confession here operates against the defense of repression: what was buried is brought to the surface and offered to judgment, and the metaphor of sand becomes the tolerated, aesthetically mediated form in which unbearable content can be consciously held (Freud, 1908/1959). The simile is thus not ornament but sublimated knowledge: a socially and religiously valued image that renders an otherwise overwhelming affect thinkable.

The educational value of this stanza is the integration of the past through symbolic formulation. Both in psychotherapy and in education, unexamined past behavior returns as symptom—anxiety, repetition, self-sabotage—until it is symbolized and owned. The stanza teaches that the moral weight of one's history cannot be wished away (the sand cannot be counted away) but can be faced, named, and carried to a tribunal of mercy. For moral education, this is the pedagogy of the examined life: honesty about one's record, expressed in the tolerable language of metaphor, is the precondition of reformation rather than the trigger of despair.

4.4 Stanza 4: Diminishing Time, Accumulating Sin, Thanatos, and the Educational Value of Time-Consciousness

The fourth stanza introduces the poem's most existentially charged opposition: "My life decreases with every day, / while my sin increases; how can I bear it?" The verse constructs what may be called a psychic double-entry ledger, in which the two curves of life-time and guilt move in opposite directions. Psychoanalytically, this is the moment at which the reality of finitude breaks into consciousness: the subject's Eros—the drive that binds, preserves, and seeks continuation—is confronted by Thanatos, the deathward drive, here rationalized as the steady subtraction of days (Freud, 1920/1955).

The stanza's closing question, "kayfa ihtimālī?" ("how can I bear it?"), registers the ego's realistic assessment of its own capacity: the psychic apparatus can neither reverse the subtraction of time nor halt the accumulation of guilt. In Freud's anxiety theory, this is realistic anxiety shading into neurotic anxiety—a situation in which the ego feels its resources overwhelmed by a danger it cannot master (Freud, 1926/1959). The superego, meanwhile, functions here as the merciless auditor of the ledger, intensifying its pressure as the margin of life narrows. The stanza thus constitutes the poem's existential nadir: the point of maximal tension between Eros and Thanatos, and the point at which neurotic guilt threatens to become despair.

The educational value of this stanza is time-consciousness as a moral catalyst. The perception that one's capital of days is finite—and that moral debt accrues interest—is among the most powerful motivators in ethical education. Unlike fear-based preaching, which numbs, the stanza's arithmetic (life down, guilt up) invites the learner to audit time itself. The pedagogical lesson is urgency joined to responsibility: the proper response to finitude is not panic but the swift redirection of remaining days toward repair. That the poem does not end here but moves to surrender in the final two stanzas is itself psychodynamically and pedagogically significant: the ego, unable to resolve the equation of time and sin by its own resources, is educated toward the solution of faith.

4.5 Stanza 5: Surrender, Ego-Humiliation, and the Educational Value of Humility

The fifth stanza enacts the poem's climactic renunciation: "Your disobedient servant comes to You, / confessing his sins and calling upon You." Its keywords—servant ('abd), disobedient ('āṣī), comes (atā), confessing (muqirran)—describe a wholesale dismantling of ego-defenses. The ego abandons the narcissistic stance of

omnipotence and self-sufficiency; it presents itself not as master of its fate but as a dependent, erring subordinate (Freud, 1923/1961). This voluntary humiliation of the ego is the precise inverse of the defensive posture of denial, and its psychodynamic value lies in this renunciation: by surrendering the fiction of control, the ego liberates energy previously consumed in defensive maintenance.

The posture the speaker assumes—a childlike turning toward an all-powerful protector—corresponds to what ego psychology would later term regression in the service of the ego: a temporary, adaptive return to an earlier mode of relating (dependence on a parental figure) that strengthens rather than weakens adult functioning. The divine addressee functions psychically as the primary object on whom absolute dependence is projected, and prayer becomes the sublimated channel into which the entire surplus of psychic energy—guilt, fear, longing—is directed (Freud, 1908/1959). Where stanza 4 ended in the ego's incapacity, stanza 5 finds a new capacity: the capacity to ask.

The educational value of this stanza is humility as strength rather than humiliation. In educational psychology, a growth mindset presupposes the learner's willingness to occupy the position of the not-yet-competent; pride, conversely, is the epistemic block that prevents learning from error. The stanza models an educated humility: the admission "I am the disobedient servant" is not self-contempt but the accurate relational mapping of the self before transcendence and before its own limits. For learners habituated to conceal failure, the stanza teaches that coming forward—atāka, "I come to You"—is the decisive educational act by which error becomes material for transformation.

4.6 Stanza 6: Relinquished Omnipotence, and the Educational Value of Trust Beyond the Self

The final stanza completes the psychic arc: "If You forgive, You are worthy of that; / and if You drive me away, in whom shall I hope besides You?" Its first hemistich delivers to God the prerogative that stanza 1 had withheld from the self: the right to declare worthiness ("ahlan" now belongs to the Divine). The ego's claim to judge its own case—the residue of omnipotence—is thereby surrendered entirely (Freud, 1923/1961). The second hemistich articulates the recognition of absolute object-dependence: no alternative object of hope exists. In object-relations terms, the speaker's entire libidinal investment is consolidated in a single, secure attachment to the Divine, a configuration that confers stability rather than vulnerability because the object is represented as unfailingly merciful (Ekström, 2004).

Crucially, the superego is transformed across this arc. In stanzas 1 and 4 it appeared as the persecutory judge whose verdict the speaker internalized ("I am not worthy"; "how can I bear it?"). By the final stanza, judgment has been relocated from the self to God, whose defining attribute is pardon ("ghāfir al-dhanb al-'azīm", stanza 2). Neurotic guilt—the self-punishing, circuitous suffering Freud distinguished from genuine remorse (Freud, 1917/1957)—is thereby converted into reparative hope. The poem ends, psychodynamically, in homeostasis: id fear appeased by promised mercy, superego reconciled through the ethics of forgiveness, and the ego relieved of an impossible burden. The formal beauty of the verse—its balanced hemistichs, its recapitulation of the opening rhyme—is the aesthetic seal on this achieved equilibrium, an instance of sublimation in which psychic pain has been transmuted into a durable, communally shareable work of art and a durable instrument of education (Niaz et al., 2019).

The educational value of this stanza is trust beyond the self as the foundation of resilience. Learners educated in cultures of self-reliance often interpret every setback as a verdict on their worth; the stanza models a different economy of hope, in which worth is conferred by a relationship rather than manufactured by performance. Educationally, this is the value of tawakkul (trust): sustained effort joined to the relinquishment of final control. The stanza teaches that the educated person does not deny dependence but locates it well.

4.7 Synthesis: The Poem as a Staged Education of the Soul

Read sequentially, the six stanzas form a remarkably complete psychodynamic sequence, and at each station a distinct educational value is deposited. Stanza 1 stages the conflict (superego vs. id, ego immobilized) and models honest self-assessment. Stanza 2 initiates catharsis and petition, lowering tension and modeling constructive hope. Stanza 3 raises repressed guilt into consciousness through the tolerable medium of metaphor, modeling the integration

of one's past. Stanza 4 confronts the subject with Thanatos and the economics of time, producing the poem's maximal anxiety and its lesson of time-consciousness. Stanza 5 dissolves ego-defenses through adaptive regression and surrender, modeling humility as strength. Stanza 6 consolidates a secure object-attachment, transmutes guilt into hope, and models trust beyond the self, restoring equilibrium. The sequence parallels, in compressed poetic form, the analytic process itself—the lifting of repression, the working-through of affect, and the reorganization of the personality around an integrated relation to authority, guilt, and finitude (Freud, 1917/1957, 1926/1959)—and it reads equally as a curriculum: six short lessons in the education of desire, conscience, and hope.

It should be emphasized that this reading does not reduce the poem's religious meaning to psychology; rather, it shows how the poem's religious performative—repentance—is represented as a coherent psychological process that carries an explicit pedagogy, which is arguably one reason the text remains effective in lived devotional and educational contexts. The convergence of the poem's semantic analyses in the existing literature—its matrix of hope (Nashihah, 2024), its semantic fields of sin and forgiveness (Fitrah, 2024), and its philosophy-of-language grounding in the act of confession (Ananda, 2023)—is precisely what a Freudian reading predicts: a text that works psychologically and educationally on its readers will concentrate its verbal means on exactly these nodes of conflict and resolution.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has applied Freudian psychoanalytic criticism to Abu Nuwas's *Al-I'tiraf* and found that the poem's six stanzas enact a complete intrapsychic journey of repentance, at each stage of which a distinct educational value is encoded and conveyed. The opening stanza dramatizes the ego's paralysis between the superego's verdict of unworthiness and the id's terror of punishment, modeling honest self-assessment. The second stanza initiates catharsis and the restoration of equilibrium through the plea for pardon, modeling constructive hope grounded in realism. The third stanza brings repressed, uncountable guilt—figured as sand—into conscious, metaphorically mediated awareness, modeling the integration of one's moral past. The fourth stanza confronts the speaker with Thanatos as life-time diminishes while guilt accumulates, producing the poem's maximal existential anxiety and its lesson of time-consciousness. The fifth stanza dissolves ego-omnipotence in an adaptive regression toward dependence on the Divine, modeling humility as educational strength. The sixth consolidates the transformation: judgment is relocated to a merciful God, neurotic guilt is transmuted into hope, trust beyond the self is established, and psychic homeostasis is restored.

The findings suggest two broader implications for the study of educational values in literature. First, psychoanalytic theory retains substantial explanatory power for the reading of classical Islamic devotional verse, provided it is applied to the text's represented psyche rather than to speculative biography—an application consistent with both Freud's own literary essays and contemporary cautions in psychoanalytic criticism. Second, *Al-I'tiraf* may be pedagogically valuable beyond its religious use: as a compact literary case study of confession, anxiety, and reconciliation, it offers students of literature, psychology, and moral education a rare cross-cultural artifact in which the "talking cure" is enacted in verse and a complete sequence of educational values—self-knowledge, hope, integration of the past, time-consciousness, humility, and trust—is dramatized rather than merely preached. Limitations of this study include its reliance on a single textual witness and its bracketing of historical questions of attribution surrounding the poem; future research might extend the framework comparatively across the Arabic *zuhdiyyāt* corpus, develop the identified values into instructional design for character education, or test the reading experimentally against reader-response data from its contemporary devotional and educational audiences.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

Author Contributions

Wahyudin: conceptualization, theoretical framework, writing—original draft. Zulqadri Suaib: writing—review and editing, cross-linguistic verification. Khotijah: data collection, methodology, writing—review and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data Availability

The primary data analyzed in this study—the Arabic text of Al-I'tiraf and the translations consulted—are publicly available in the sources cited. No new empirical data were generated or analyzed in support of this research.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval

Not applicable. This study is a qualitative literary and documentary analysis and did not involve human participants, animal subjects, or identifiable private data.

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