This paper will show that Kafka, in his enigmatic short story, "A Visit to a Mine," depicted the concept of identification in a literary manner, similar to the way Freud articulated identification in his psychoanalytic writings. It will be argued that the subjects found in "A Visit to a Mine," and who were used by Kafka in his quest for personal and professional identification, were among the most important European writers of the early twentieth century. This group of authors with whom Kafka identified included many highly influential figures, such as; Gorki, von Hofmannsthal, H. Mann and Anatole France.

The eminent literary critic, Marthe Robert, has demonstrated the close connection between Kafka and Freud through their mutual use of the psychological process known as identification (179-180 and 238). However, the examples from Kafka’s life and work which Robert uses to make her case are brief. Also, she does not offer any specific examples where Kafka might have identified with other persons.¹

Therefore, in order to give greater validity to the contention that Kafka articulated the Freudian psychological process of identification his short story, “A Visit to a Mine,” will now be analyzed. It will shown that in this story, Kafka, taking a literary path, depicted

¹ The examples Robert uses focus upon Kafka’s identification with animals, such as a mole, and with collective subjects, such as the Jewish people.
identification in a Freudian way. The argument will also be made that in "A Visit to a Mine" the subjects used by Kafka in his quest for personal and professional identification were among the most important European writers of the early twentieth century. These subjects included, for example, impressive luminaries such as Anatole France, Heinrich Mann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Maxim Gorki.

KAFKA AND FREUD

There has been much research done on the similar thought processes found in the writings of Kafka and Freud.\(^2\) The consensus of this research is that not only did Kafka inherit the same turn-of-the-century European view of humanity as Freud, but that Kafka also manifested specific Freudian ideas in his writings (Greenberg 70–71).

Kafka first became acquainted with the ideas of Freud at a lecture series he attended in 1912.\(^3\) Kafka then indicated his familiarity with Freud's work through a diary entry, dated September 23, 1912, which was the day after he had written the story, "The Judgment". Here, Kafka mentions the ideas which passed through his mind as he was writing "The Judgment," and he specifically states "thoughts of Freud, of course" (*Diaries, 1910–1913* 276).

In 1917, Kafka again became involved in Freudian psychology, owing to a friendship he developed with Otto Gross who was a disciple of Freud's. In the midst of this relationship, Kafka wrote to another friend about psychoanalysis that it was a "damnedly psychological theory which you have no love for but which obsesses you" (*Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors* 159). Also, in

\(^2\) Some of the researchers who have compared the ideas of Kafka and Freud are: Adorno (100–101); Gilman (158–160 and 181–182); Greenberg (71–72); Kurz (143–149); Marson and Leopold (146–160); Michaels (164–166) and Robert (111–115).

\(^3\) On this matter, see Baumer (74) and Marson and Leopold (146).