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THE FREUDIAN STRUCTURAL MODEL OF THE MIND IN “AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE”

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the portrayal of a fragmented mind in the short story “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by the American writer Ambrose Bierce. In this context, this study focuses on the perceptual disorder and hallucinations caused by the character’s inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality in the last moments of his life, as a result of being condemned to death during the Civil War. The delusions created by the unconscious also open a door for the character to distance himself from reality. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the protagonist’s fragmented mind and the unconscious, this study employs the Freudian structural model of the mind under the headings of id, ego and superego. Thus, this study explains the delusions of the unconscious mind in a state of danger in terms of repressed idealized self-images and defense mechanisms based on the reality principle. Furthermore, it also deals with the relationship between the life and death instincts of the unconscious to maintain the survival of the self. Consequently, this research contributes to the analysis of the processes and phases that the unconscious follows in order to overcome a state of danger.

Keywords: Ambrose Bierce, The unconscious, Fragmentation, Delusion, Freudian structural model

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“AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE” HİKAYESİNDEKİ FREUDYEN YAPISAL ZİHİN MODELİ

Dilara KALKAN³, Mukadder ERKAN⁴

ÖZ

Bu makale, Amerikalı yazar Ambrose Bierce’in “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” adlı kısa öyküsündeki parçalanmış bir zihnin tasvirini incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, İç Savaş sırasında ölüme mahkûm edilen karakterin hayatının son anlarında hayal ve gerçeği ayırt edememesinin yol açtığı algı bozukluğu ve halüsinasyonlara odaklanır. Bilinçaltının ortaya çıkardığı bu sanrılar, aynı zamanda karakteri gerçeklikten uzaklaştıran bir kapı aralamaktadır. Dolayısıyla, kahramanın parçalanmış zihnini ve bilinçaltını daha iyi anlayabilmek için id, ego ve süperegö başlıkları altında Freudyen yapısal zihin modeli kullanılmıştır. Böylece, bu çalışma, tehlike durumunda bilinçaltının ortaya çıkardığı sanrılar, bastırılmış ideal benlik imgeleri ve gerçeklik ilkesine dayalı savunma mekanizmalarıyla açıklar. Ayrıca, benliğin hayatta kalmasını sağlamak amacıyla bilinçaltının yaşam ve ölüm dürtüleri arasındaki ilişkiyi ele alır. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma, bilincin tehlike anında kurtulmak için izlediği yol ve aşamaların analizine katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ambrose Bierce, Bilinçaltı, Parçalanma, Sanrı, Freudyen yapısal model

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Introduction

“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce is one of the symbolic short stories that depicts the conflict between illusion and reality within the psychological perspective of the Civil War. In his narrative, Bierce presents a fragmented psyche in the face of death and its delusional thoughts on the denial of reality. Moreover, Bierce takes Peyton Farquhar, the protagonist, on a journey to specify the psychological state of trauma. However, the journey that is expressed is a psychological journey that is happening in a state of destruction. Thus, he divides this journey into three chapters in his narrative. Indeed, he demonstrates the process of a disoriented mind from the beginning of the story to the end. These chapters can be adapted as the stages of the unconscious and its desire to survive to preserve existence, denial to refuse destruction, and the final destiny of death. Therefore, the story deals with the themes of the instability of reality, the power of illusion, and the fear of death in the fragmented mind of a traumatized self. In this context, the fragmentation of the story can be observed and analyzed in relation to the concept of the unconscious as developed by Sigmund Freud. The Unconscious is a complex entity which contains various notions such as desires, instincts, pleasures, fears, and repressed ideas. Freud has conceptualized a structural model to provide a detailed understanding of these notions within the context of psychoanalysis. In his narrative, Bierce presents unconscious thoughts, emotions and actions derived from them and exemplifies them by using certain techniques. While conveying the fragmentation and the protagonist’s disoriented fantasies that result from it, Bierce also employs a fragmented environment of time and place. The environment Bierce creates and the fractured protagonist he gives voice to contribute significantly to the shaping of an example of what Freud conceptualized as the unconscious and its deep influences. In order to represent the instability of the mind, he uses flashbacks and flash-forwards, jumping from the present to the past. In this way, he conveys the fluidity of Farquhar’s thoughts and his disorientated state of mind. Moreover, to reflect the denial (from Freudian defense mechanisms) which Farquhar experiences, Bierce uses the unreliable narrator as a tool to reflect Farquhar’s unconscious mind and how it manipulates the protagonist. Consequently, the non-linear timeline of the narrative allows the truth to be revealed only at the end by the unreliable narrator as an illustration of how the unconscious works. In order to gain further insight into Farquhar’s state of mind, it is necessary to analyze the Freudian structural model of the mind. Therefore, in this study, the demonstration of the fragmented mind in “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” will be analyzed through the Freudian structural model of the mind: id, ego and superego. Within this analysis, the id will contain the pleasure and survival drive, the death drive and the uncanny. The ego will be characterized by the perspectives of the reality principle and the defense mechanism. Finally, the super-ego will be examined with a focus on the norms of society and the idealized self. Consequently, the structural model of the mind will allow the deconstruction of Farquhar’s desires, impulses and repressions as he recollects them at the moment of death.

In the context of this academic paper, the narrative of Ambrose Bierce’s “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” is linked to psychological issues, particularly the Freudian unconscious. The short story has been analyzed extensively in academic research, as it offers insights into the human mind with its themes and techniques. In his study “Meaning and Effect in Fiction: An Evolutionary Model of Interpretation Illustrated with a Reading of ‘Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge’” (2012), Joseph Carroll reviews the relationship between fiction and human nature by using Bierce’s story as an example. By posing the questions first and answering them later, he sheds light on Bierce’s themes in accordance with the human mind: “The passion for survival, the terror of death and love of life, and yearning for wife and children are common basic motives rooted in our evolved human nature” (Carroll, 2012, p. 312). He underlines Bierce’s aim to connect his fiction with human nature and psyche. Moreover, he justifies

Bierce's themes as universal struggles which individuals deal with in certain circumstances. In *Understanding Fiction*, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren interpret the story in the context of the fictional meaning in the opposite way: "The plot that depends on some peculiarity of human psychology as does 'Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge' may give as a shock of surprise, but it does not carry a fictional meaning" (Brooks & Warren, 1979, p. 123). Thus, they reject the idea that the story has a fictional meaning. While Brooks and Warren claim that the surprise explained at the end of the story has no fictional significance, George Cheatham defends its importance in shaping the story in his essay "Point of View in Bierce's 'Owl Creek Bridge'" (1985) as: "In other words, the story's surprise ending gives more than a mere shock of surprise; it carries fictional meaning as well" (Cheatham, 1985, p. 221). Harriet Kramer Linkin mentions Bierce's representation of psychology in her article "Narrative Technique in 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge'" (1988), stating, "Bierce reproduces the condemned man's psychological disorientation among the members of his audience through temporal displacements and shifting points of view" (Linkin, 1988, p.149). According to her statement, Bierce's various techniques contribute to the representation of the fragmented mind of the protagonist. In "Literary Semantics and the Fiction of Ambrose Bierce" (1974), Cathy N. Davidson also underlines the importance of the unconscious in Bierce's story: "Thus, Bierce focuses, in his war stories, less on the external circumstances of battle and more on the conflicts within the protagonist's mind" (Davidson, 1974, p. 264). Within this context, Davidson highlights Bierce's portrayal of an inner conflict and how delusions can be more dangerous than the physical risks of a war. Another example of the significance of the mind is mentioned in Clifford R. Ames's study "Do I Wake or Sleep? Technique as Content in Ambrose Bierce's Short Story, 'An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge'" (1987), Ames describes the occurrence as "the journey of the reader into the psychology of a condemned man as he struggles to deny time and reality moments before his death" (Ames, 1987, p. 65). Ames suggests that a deep dive into Farquhar's mind, especially his unconscious, is the journey the reader takes with him. Similarly, both Davidson and Ames interpret Farquhar's psychology in their studies as well. Davidson defends the idea that Bierce is concerned with the psychological rather than the physical effects of war. Although some studies appear to support the psychological aspect of this narrative, further examination of the unconscious is required in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its functions. Therefore, the focus of this study will be on the connection between Bierce's portrayal of fragmentation within the Freudian perspective of the structural model of the mind. Furthermore, the structural model will be linked to the concept of the life and death instinct, defense mechanisms, and the expected norms of the society in the narrative through Farquhar's thoughts and behaviors.

The Portrayal of the Psychoanalytic Theory of the Story

Ambrose Bierce's short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" is mainly divided into three parts to portray the events. While narrating his story, Bierce primarily concentrates on the psychology of his protagonist, Farquhar. Furthermore, Bierce's narrative on psychology displays itself in the very final sentences of the work, unravelling the truth to the readers. In this way, Bierce invites his audience to engage in active reading, in which they can question, explore, and analyze the story from beginning to end. Ironically, it is at the end of the story that the process of psychoanalysis takes shape in Bierce's writing structure. Consequently, the psychoanalytic theory can be employed as a method of examining the mental states of Farquhar. "Psychoanalysis is learned, first of all, from a study of one's self, through the study of one's own personality" (Freud, 2021, p. 14). In this sense, it is also significant to consider Bierce's personal experiences at war. "As a war author, Bierce is the only one of the great literary figures who actually served as a front-line soldier in the American Civil War" (Charles River Editors, 2018, p. 6). Bierce's engagement with the American Civil War is reflected in his narrative

technique and style, which present readers with a highly detailed and realistic structure. "Bierce's enlistment on behalf of the Union came only a few days after President Lincoln's general call for volunteers" (Charles River Editors, 2018, p. 12). As a soldier of the Union, Bierce had direct access to information about the realities of war and the experiences of soldiers.

The narrative unfolds in Alabama, a pivotal locale in the American Civil War. Peyton Farquhar is the protagonist, positioned on the Confederate side of the war, and is subjected to a death sentence. As a supporter of slavery, Farquhar is deceived by a Confederate agent disguised as a Union soldier. This deception leads him to attempt to sabotage Owl Creek Bridge. Throughout the narrative, Bierce represents Farquhar's psychological state in the moment of his death and his efforts to avoid it, with the escape occurring not on a physical level but on a mental one. "At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties" (Bierce, 1995, p. 3). In the first part, a scene is portrayed in which a man with a rope around his neck awaits his impending punishment, which will ultimately result in his demise. "As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside" (Bierce, 1995, p. 5). Nevertheless, the final sentence makes it clear that Farquhar's supposed escape is merely a dream he experienced in his final moments. Bierce eventually creates a new door, inviting readers to enter the protagonist's mind during his death sentence.

At this point, Bierce decides to move on to the second part. Here, he gives information about his protagonist: "...he was naturally an original secessionist" (Bierce, 1995, p. 5). Readers may notice a distinctive use of words when referring to the protagonist in part one and part two, such as the use of "is" in the first and "was" in the second, as an act of foreshadowing. This section of the story primarily focuses on the internal monologue of the protagonist, who is said to have escaped his death in the second part. Additionally, readers are guided to a route both internal and external in which they continuously investigate. In the first sentence of the final part, Bierce illustrates Farquhar's situation as someone who has "lost consciousness" (Bierce, 1995, p. 7). "Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge" (Bierce, 1995, p. 15). Bierce ends the story with a bombshell, after the series of events Farquhar faces on his way home as he opens his arms to embrace his wife. Towards the end of his narrative, Bierce allows the reader to analyze Farquhar's inability to defeat his downfall and his final escape as a journey nothing more than a psychological one during his last moments before death. Furthermore, the structure of a non-linear timeline enables the reader to line up the parts of the story while examining it from its inception. This can be seen as analogous to Farquhar's psychological state, which is characterized by his inability to concentrate in a fragmented state. Thus, Bierce goes deep into the mind not only of his protagonist Farquhar, but also of his readers by resolving the reality at the end. Consequently, Bierce's narrative can be interpreted in the context of psychoanalysis.

An illustration of the Fragmented Unconscious in the Story

Indeed, one of the distinctive features of Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" is the portrayal of the fragmented self and psyche of a man who witnesses a traumatic event called the Civil War. "His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged" (Bierce, 1995, p. 3). Forcing to face death while standing on a bridge with a rope hanging around his neck, it is unavoidable to observe how Farquhar's mind is broken to pieces. Farquhar cannot think clearly, as he is interrupted by the harsh reality. Moreover, his senses are so fragile that his mind becomes a vulnerable place in which he can go back in time and place to distort the current moment. To convey the dissolution and fragmentation of mind and place through his narrative, Bierce deliberately takes Farquhar on a journey between past and present as the story unfolds.

While Farquhar gets lost in the sea of memories and fantasies, his psyche begins to evoke flashbacks of himself in the second part. Thus, the readers are invited into the past of the protagonist. These flashbacks are the creation of his unconscious, which longs to change the time. By a sudden move, Farquhar's mind is transported back to the present moment in the third part. Hence, Farquhar's thoughts have moved, first from admitting death to longing for the past, then from the search for an escape to admitting that he has managed to escape. "He had no wish to perfect his escape, was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken" (Bierce, 1995, p. 13). Farquhar gains the strength to live and enjoy the moment which he is surrounded by. He wants to stay, to forget everything, even to escape, and he gets caught up in this wish. However, later, his goal changes suddenly as his thoughts turn to his wife and children. The flows and changes in his thoughts and desires can be identified as a consequence of his unstable and fragmented psyche. Upon reaching the white light that guides him to his wife, the narrative immediately shifts to an entirely different setting, as Bierce announces the ultimate resolution with Farquhar's death. This conclusion not only marks the end of the story but also signifies the resolution of Farquhar's unconscious mind.

The Analysis of Farquhar's Mind Through Freud's Structural Model of the Psyche

The theory of the unconscious, which Freud has contributed with his interpretations, is exemplified in the story. As Talcott Parsons summarizes in his work, the unconscious is "one of three subsystems in his total psychological system, the other two being the Conscious system and the Preconscious system" (Parsons, 1974, p. 93). Freud's perception of the unconscious has shaped the interpretation of the mind both in the perspective of psychology and literature. Similarly, Bierce's focus on the inner psyche of his protagonists shapes the flow of events through the focus on his protagonist's unconscious as well. In the Freudian structure, the id, ego, and super-ego take place to form an individual's psyche. As William Siegfried highlights, "In order to obtain an understanding as to why humans behave as they do, it is necessary to examine all three" (Siegfried, 2014, p. 1). Therefore, it is essential to demonstrate Farquhar's id, ego, and superego in order to interpret the story from a Freudian perspective.

Farquhar's Id: Eros, Thanatos and the Uncanny

The id part of Freud's structure "is the only part of the psyche that is present at birth and it is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires, and impulses; particularly our sexual and aggressive drives" (Siegfried, 2014, p. 1). According to the statement, the id has been constructed since the existence of an individual. In addition, the unconscious is shaped by the desire to achieve the satisfaction it craves. One of the aspects with which this structure is concerned is the instinct of the individual to survive subconsciously. Throughout the narrative, Farquhar's id strives to survive the catastrophic ending by achieving to beat his demise.

The id is the unrestrained part of the mind which seeks the necessities of existence such as survival, food, and sexual desires. "The id operates unconsciously, accords with primary process, and impels the organism to engage in need satisfying, tension-reducing activities, which are experienced as pleasure" (Lapsley & Stey, 2012, p. 5). Moreover, it contains the desires and taste of satisfaction in it. In the way Freud conceptualized the power of desires, there are two in particular that play a fundamental role in fulfilling the id's pleasures: Eros and Thanatos. Christine Downing analyses the use of the mythological names for psychoanalysis in his work of *Sigmund Freud and the Greek Mythological Tradition*: "Of course, Freud does not call them 'gods' but rather 'instincts'. The instincts, especially the sexual instinct, are irreducible for Freud; they are ultimate terms, self-explicable" (Downing, 1965, p. 5). Although these drives play a significant role in the id, they are instincts that clash, and neither can dominate the other forever like a god figure. "The emergence of life is therefore the cause both of the urge to carry on living and, simultaneously, of the urge for death, while life itself is a

battle and constant compromise between these two urges" (Freud, 2003, p. 161). The pleasure principle and the death drive serve distinct functions for the unconscious and the self. Nevertheless, despite their distinct aims, they ultimately collide with each other. These two terms have significantly influenced the development of psychoanalysis within the Freudian context.

Farquhar, who must deal with a traumatic event, loses his ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. As a result, he tries to hold on to a desire that will allow him to survive. In his work, J. E. Barnhart defines the role of the pleasure principle on a human and adds "at least the human organism is naturally predisposed to gain positive experiences of pleasure and to hold on to this pleasure" (Barnhart, 1972, p. 113). Therefore, this feeling, as the Freudian approach describes, is the pleasure principle and Farquhar's unconscious, mainly the id, plans to achieve it. Thus, the efforts of Farquhar's subconscious to pursue pleasure are illustrated throughout the story. The first implication of pleasure is mentioned in the first part of the story when Farquhar experiences a disturbance in his mind: "He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children" (Bierce, 1995, p. 4). When he closes his eyes to the reality, he feels a strong emotion towards his wife. In this way, he is given the hope that he will survive and be able to return home. Although this hope is presented as a physiological escape from death, it is the representation of his unconscious desire to hold on to an object that ensures his existence. In the following passages, Farquhar remembers his wife again and mentions her hands as he travels back in his mind to survive. In his work, Robert Rowland Smith examines Freudian ideas in mainly literature, and he notes that "Freud increasingly portrays pleasure as a life energy, a reaching-out to connect and bond with others, which is life's condition for generating more life" (Smith, 2010, p. 7). Following his statement, the pleasure principle, which has the aim of survival for Farquhar, is signified by his wife. Moreover, through his wife, Farquhar can produce and prevail in his existence in the long run. His unconscious mind is already aware of this fact, which is why it creates the desire to return to his wife several times in the narrative.

The power of desire to achieve pleasure can influence one's behaviors and motives. "The pleasure principle drives the Id to seek immediate gratification of all needs, wants, and desires" (Siegfried, 2014, p. 1). Similarly, Farquhar finds immediately the strength not to give up after all the attacks that he has escaped by thinking of his wife once again: "At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction" (Bierce, 1995, p. 14). He finds a reason to continue his journey to fulfil this great wish. The unconscious, which knows the path that leads to this desire, creates an alternative path to guide Farquhar on his way home. As Farquhar finds his home, "he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet... she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is" (Bierce, 1995, p. 15). Finally, after all the battles, Farquhar achieves the pleasure that he had been trying to get. It is also important to note that the pleasure Farquhar believes he has achieved has some sexual implications. "It is called libido, and, as we have seen, it stakes its claim over everything, even those movements of negativity and loss that allow it to function" (Bourassa, 1995, p. 118). Similarly, despite his dreadful situation, the libido seeks its existence in Farquhar's unconscious. "Among the instinctive forces thus utilized, the sexual impulses play a significant role" (Freud, 2021, p. 19). The sexual impulse is the main instinct that controls him, as Freud defends his idea that the sexual drive is the main urge in individuals. David M. Black mentions the significance of sexual drive in his study as well: "...therefore, the sexual drives, are true 'life-drives', and work in opposition to the death drive" (Black, 2001, p. 187). According to this statement, Farquhar's pleasure principle, which is primarily shaped by his wife, clarifies his intention to survive. Thus, Bierce deliberately mentions Farquhar's wife as a sign to be achieved to avoid death. In this way, the reader

interprets Farquhar, even in his demise, as searching for a way to maintain his physiological presence as he struggles psychologically.

The id's desire to be reunited with his wife leads Farquhar to an uncanny state. In his writings, Freud describes uncanny as "the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread. It is equally beyond doubt that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, and so it commonly merges with what arouses fear in general" (Freud, 2003, p. 161). Similarly, Farquhar finds himself in eerie situations several times in the story. The first of these is that Farquhar acts as if he is familiar with a fight, when in fact he is very unfamiliar with it. Afterwards, he also tries to dodge the guns as if he had a familiar experience with them before, even though, again, it is so unfamiliar to him. Lastly, as Farquhar finds his way back home, the road seems unfamiliar to him. Even though he knows the way of his own house, in this sense it is not the same road he used to walk before his punishment. This road is the uncanny which he had never experienced before: "He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation" (Bierce, 1995, p. 14). Now he realises that his home, his comfort zone, has also become unfamiliar. Farquhar's mind is coming one step closer to unravelling. Thus, he cannot stay focused in his fantasy world and sometimes it becomes blurred. To provide an accurate and comprehensive definition of the term "unheimlich", Freud offers the following translation: "'uncanny' and 'eerie', but which etymologically corresponds to 'unhomely'" (Freud, 2003, p. 162). In this particular case, Farquhar is experiencing an unhomely situation, in which familiar objects and situations turn unfamiliar: "It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere" (Bierce, 19985, p. 14). Farquhar notices some features he has never seen before as he observes the surroundings of the road. "...the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud, 2003, p. 162). Thus, the familiar road to home, which had previously been unchanging, is now perceived as unfamiliar by Farquhar. In this uncanny road, he is the only passenger who walks through it. Therefore, it can be assumed that the description of this road is metaphorically a psychological journey that Farquhar takes for the first and last time in his life. Farquhar has already passed the point where he can no longer tell what is real and what is not. Besides, even the created environment begins to unravel as he does.

Farquhar "is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence" (Bierce, 1995, p. 15). It is with this statement that Bierce announces the death of Farquhar and his body in the last part of the story. Despite being sheltered by Eros, the life instinct mainly operated by the pleasure principle, throughout the story, Farquhar cannot escape from Thanatos, the death drive, at the end. Smith underlines the significance of it as: "Although we are universally motivated by the fulfilment of wishes, the fulfilment brings a peaceful satisfaction implying that what we were wishing for, all along, was death" (Smith, 2010, p. 5). Correspondingly, even if it seems to be easy to draw a conclusion, there is still a controversial question about these two powerful drives in a Freudian sense. Was it Eros that Farquhar wished to achieve or was it Thanatos all along? Although this statement about the pleasure principle and the death drive is still debated in Freudian psychoanalysis, one should remind himself that these two drives are the primary regulators of the unconscious.

Farquhar's Ego: Reality Principle and the Defense Mechanisms

Freud's other element in his structure of the psyche is the ego: "In the ego perception plays the part which in the id devolves upon instinct. The ego represents what we call reason and sanity, in contrast to the id which contains the passions" (Freud, 2010, p. 13). In contrast to the id, which seeks immediate satisfaction, the ego considers the circumstances of reality and measures the consequences of actions. Likewise, Farquhar's ego perceives and evaluates the

conditions in which he finds himself on the level of reality. "...tensions arising from physical need can remain unconscious, so also can physical pain, a thing intermediate between external and internal perception, which acts like an internal perception even when its source is in the external world" (Freud, 2010, p. 12). Similarly, when Farquhar encounters with the reality of death, instead of accepting the truth, he tries to avoid this physical pain with the desire to stay alive. In this essence, the dream represented throughout the story serves as a defense mechanism for all his actions. Thus, the presence of Owl Creek Bridge functions as a portal which Farquhar enters the internal perception through the external one.

Meanwhile, Farquhar's id desperately desires an immediate escape, his ego elaborates on the situation at the same time. "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home" (Bierce, 1995, p. 4). At this moment, rather than responding to an immediate impulse from the id, Farquhar's ego formulates a goal for a reasonable escape plan. The ego evaluates the threats it might face while running from the army, such as bullets. As Farquhar dodges the first risk, he and his ego estimate and take measures for the next threat by evaluating the first one. "The officer," he reasoned, "will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot" (Bierce, 1995, p. 12). Having gained experience from the previous attacks from the enemy, Farquhar's reason now calms the id's impulses. When the ego perceives a sense of threat, the power relationship between the id and the ego changes: "Just as the pleasure-ego can do nothing but *wish*, pursue pleasure and avoid unpleasure, so the reality-ego has no other task than to strive for what is *useful* and to protect itself from what is harmful" (Freud, 2005, p. 40). The potential desires that threaten the self are silent in the ego to reduce the risk of destruction. Similarly, Farquhar's wishes and desires in the id have been controlling him for a very long time without him realizing. Therefore, the ego alerts itself to defend the psyche, as Freud describes the aim "of repression is to avoid unpleasure" (Freud, 2005, p.80). Farquhar's political ideas, which support slavery, pose a danger both to himself and to those around him. "Everything repressed has to remain unconscious" (Freud, 2005, p.87). If they reach the conscious level, they can urge his body to achieve the final action. "...they are prevented from becoming conscious by *repression*, which manifests itself, especially during analysis, as resistance to attempts to bring them into consciousness" (Peters, 1956, p. 5)." As a result, Farquhar finds himself and his perception repressed. While explaining the process of repression, Freud highlights the connection between repression and unconscious: "we obtain our concept of the unconscious, therefore, from the theory of repression. The repressed serves us as a prototype of the unconscious" (Freud, 2010, p. 6). Farquhar, a Confederate sympathizer whose town has been taken over by the Union Army, struggles to control his desires. Consequently, to avoid destruction, Farquhar's dangerous political beliefs and motives are repressed (for a while until he decides to sabotage the bridge) by the ego as a primary defense mechanism.

In addition to repression, denial is another notion included in Freudian defense mechanisms that are exemplified in Farquhar's ego. "Insofar as these facts are highly upsetting or represent potential damage to self-esteem, denial can in principle be a very useful defense mechanism" (Baumeister et al., 1998, p. 1107). From the moment Farquhar finds himself at the top of the bridge, he is confronted with the reality of death. Consequently, the ego denies the threat from the outside which can become the end of Farquhar's existence. "As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened" (Bierce, 1995, p. 7). From a conceptual perspective, if Farquhar were to gain access to reality, it would be so dangerous that he would not know how to deal with it. His ego attempts to protect him from the external reality by creating fences in his thoughts. Therefore, it is not the conscious but the unconscious part of his psyche that is

awakened. “The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream” (Bierce, 1995, p. 8). Farquhar’s ego is attempting to manipulate him into believing that he has freed himself from the rope and can now run away. The illusion created by the ego gives Farquhar the chance to survive. In this way, the ego responds to the id’s impulsive desires for survival by employing the defense mechanism. “Farquhar dived — dived as deeply as he could” (Bierce, 1995, p. 11). Although the reader perceives the act of diving as a physiological one, Farquhar actually dives deep into his mind, especially his unconscious. “He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking” (Bierce, 1995, p. 8). Farquhar’s sinking is not a physical one but a psychological torment. He is drowning in his unconscious rather than in the cold water.

Farquhar shuts down the conscious and enters the world of unconsciousness. In this dark world, he can manipulate, fool, and comfort himself by escaping the responsibility of facing reality. When he hears the “ticking of his watch” he closes his eyes as his consciousness falls asleep once again. The tick-tock sound of a watch evokes the action of hypnosis, in a way Farquhar’s ego hypnotizes itself. “There is a clear relationship between the hypnotic state and sleep, which is the essential condition of dreams” (Freud, 2021, p. 106). As Freud notes in his analysis of the relationship between sleep and a hypnotic state, there is a notable connection between these two concepts, particularly in regard to the role of dreaming in each. “Sleep is a condition in which I wish to have nothing to do with the external world... by going to sleep, I say to the external world, ‘Leave me in peace, for I wish to sleep’” (Freud, 2021, p. 88). This description of sleep can be analyzed as a parallel to Farquhar’s desire to escape from the external world, which ultimately leads to his death, and to enter into a state of dream where he is free. The ego’s attempt to tame the desires of the id takes the form of a hypnotic illusion. “Why does not the psyche go to sleep? Probably because there is something which gives it no rest. Stimuli act upon the psyche, and it must react to them” (Freud, 2021, p. 89). As Farquhar struggles to survive, ego, which is aware of the id’s anxiety, distorts reality and aims to create a safe place to control the state of panic of the id. Farquhar is stuck in a twisted perception of his unconscious. Although the precise moment of Farquhar’s demise remains uncertain, it is clear that in the final part of the story, Farquhar’s attempt to escape is an illusion. Moreover, the events Farquhar encounters are the consequence of the ego’s defense mechanisms which shelter the mind from external risks and anxieties.

The presentation of water in Farquhar’s dream is of considerable importance in the Freudian interpretation of the dreams:

Birth is regularly expressed in dreams by some connection with water; one plunges into the water, or comes out of the water, which means one gives birth to, or is born. —Namely, lived in the body of his mother as an embryo in the amniotic fluid and came out of the water at the times of his birth. (Freud, 2021, p. 167)

Similarly, Farquhar’s escape, which starts from the water and ends in the woods, symbolizes his figurative birth as an idealized figure, a product of his unconscious. Furthermore, the text announces the death of the existing Farquhar, and the birth of a new Farquhar, who finds refuge in the water, which resembles the amniotic fluid in his mother’s womb, in a place where he is untouchable and unharmed. According to Freud “death is replaced in the dream by taking a journey” (Freud, 2021, p. 159). Farquhar’s exhausting journey serves to foreshadow his death to the readers through this particular perspective.

Farquhar’s Superego: Societal Expectations and the Idealized Self

The superego is the last concept in the Freudian structure of the psyche: “For Freud the Super-Ego can be described as a successful instance of identification with the parental agency” (Siegfried, 2014, p. 2). Farquhar, who has a history of being one of the families that are

categorized as slave owners, identifies his ideas mainly by focusing on this lifestyle. His parental and traditional values and expected social norms and idealized self are all shaped around this particular identification. The reader is introduced to Farquhar's political ideas and some of his personality traits through the course of the narrative: "ardently devoted to the Southern cause" (Bierce, 1995, p.5). Assuming that the Southern cause originated in both his family background and the society in which he lived, it has become an inherent part of Farquhar's personality. These desires and ideologies which have roots from his childhood days "have never been forgotten, they have only been inaccessible, latent, have belonged to the unconscious. But sometimes they bob up out of the unconscious spontaneously, and, as a matter of fact, this is what happens in dreams." (Freud, 2021, p. 211). His society's expected norms all revolve around the principles of being a slave owner. The superego, which aims to fulfil the expected roles of society, portrays a moral duty for Farquhar. Despite his lifelong commitment to the Southern cause, Farquhar failed to serve as a soldier. "...and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction" (Bierce, 1995, p. 5). Farquhar's repressed unsuccessful desire to serve as a soldier is the force that gives his superego a purpose, yet due to several circumstances, he never fully achieves this goal: "No service was too humble for him to perform in the aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him" (Bierce, 1995, p. 5). Farquhar's superego cannot fulfil the moral standard of his community's projected roles. Thus, Farquhar glorifies and idealizes war, and this glorification is encoded in his unconscious. Farquhar is "a civilian who was at heart a soldier" (Bierce, 1995, p. 5). Therefore, he wishes to sacrifice himself at the core of the war to become a war hero.

Farquhar's sacrifice and dedication can be interpreted through the lens of Freud's theory of the castration complex particularly in relation to the dynamics between a son and his father. Freud exemplifies the case of a boy which has "regarded his father as a competitor for the favours of his mother" (Freud, 1990, p. 138). From this perspective, Farquhar can be identified as the son who seeks validation from his mother, the US Nation. Consequently, he competes with his father, the North-Union supporters, in the narrative. In order to avoid being defeated by the loss of power, Farquhar attempts to seize the opportunity. Given his inability to serve as a soldier, he pursues alternative opportunities to fulfil his role as a Southern civilian. While mentioning his theory, Freud highlights the tension between boys and their father as "...their fear related at bottom to their father" (Freud, 1990, p. 137). This statement can be seen as a justification for Farquhar's (the son) decision to sabotage the bridge, which functions as an important place for the Union (the father). In this way, Farquhar, the son, is able to prove his manhood by overpowering the enemy figure. "That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in wartime. Meanwhile he did what he could" (Bierce, 1995, p. 5). As the grey uniformed soldier knocked on his door, not only he, but also his wife was happy to serve him. Additionally, the use of the color grey plays an important role in Farquhar's unconscious (during the Civil War, the uniform color of the Confederate Army was grey). Thus, the code of this color is printed in his superego as a moral symbol. "'Suppose a man — a civilian and student of hanging — should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel,' said Farquhar, smiling, 'what could he accomplish'" (Bierce, 1995, p. 6). When Farquhar is informed of an attack by the Northern Army, he does not hesitate to act, even as a lonely civilian. "A state at war makes free use of every injustice, every act of violence, that would dishonor the individual. It employs not only permissible cunning but conscious lies and intentional deception against the enemy" (Freud, 2015, p. 9). Similarly, Farquhar is deceived by the enemy without realizing it. Farquhar, on the contrary, internalizes this as an honor as it represents an opportunity to serve his cause. "The Super-Ego aims for perfection. It is made up of the organized part of the personality structure, which includes the individual's Ego ideals, spiritual goals, and one's conscience" (Siegfried, 2014, p. 2). In the context of a moral

perspective, both the superego and the conscience are in a state of relation. As a result, his superego seeks to morally accomplish a destructive plan for the benefit of the Southern cause. Although the act of damaging the bridge may be interpreted as immoral, as previously discussed, Farquhar's superego justifies the action as serving the Southern cause. Therefore, rather than characterizing his action as immoral, it is more accurate to describe it as morally correct when considered from his perspective.

By damaging the bridge, Farquhar also attempts to reach the idealized self that society has constructed for himself; a person who commits himself fully to his cause. In the journey of finding his idealized self, Farquhar's superego finally achieves the state of mind that he has always desired. Having successfully served his community, he is now in a position to become the idealized version of himself, despite not being officially a soldier. In the paragraphs that follow, Farquhar gains a strength that he has never been able to have in his life before. "I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair" (Bierce, 1995, p. 8). Even though he is in a terrifying position and struggling not to drown, his pride and desire keep him focused on achieving the idealization. This patriotic behavior is reinforced after he has reached the stage of idealization. "What splendid effort! — what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavour! Bravo" (Bierce, 1995, p. 9). Farquhar, mainly his superego, creates an idealized self that can fight for his beliefs like a soldier. Farquhar is finally living the dream he has longed for.

Furthermore, once Farquhar has tasted the achievement of the glory, he becomes brave like a soldier. "They will not do that again," he thought; "the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me — the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun" (Bierce, 1995, p. 13). For a man who has never served in a war as a soldier, Farquhar appears to possess a greater understanding of the subject than the average slave owner. He even has the knowledge to identify weapons without having to look at them. "Obsessions and those peculiar sensations of haunting dread remain as strange to normal consciousness as do dreams to our waking consciousness" (Freud, 2012, p. 3). The unconscious is like a labyrinth that contains hidden desires and fantasies in it, and in Farquhar's complex labyrinth this passion is buried, waiting to be dug out. Farquhar's psyche and perception have been affected by his obsession with pursuing a political goal and serving his cause. His entire act of playing a hero is nothing but an act of his unconscious, which has always had this desire since he was a young boy, finally embracing the chance. The obsessions that contributed to the moral expectations of the superego have shaped Farquhar's behavior. Moreover, they contribute to his strength, which allows him to become braver.

Bierce highlights the sensations that Farquhar experiences on his journey to freedom. "...saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf — saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig" (Bierce, 1995, p. 10). All these details are portrayed as if Farquhar has been reborn and is celebrating life by appreciating every little piece that gives him pleasure. Furthermore, the portrayal of an idealized Farquhar not only contributes to his strength but also his senses. "He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them" (Bierce, 1995, p. 11). As previously discussed, Bierce portrays the color grey a few times in the story and emphasizes how it is signified morally in Farquhar's mind, mainly the superego. Farquhar is caught up in the distortion of his unconscious even the colors are shaped in his imagination.

The concept of Farquhar's idealized superego can be identified by demonstrating his dream-like state. This entire idealized illusion of his superego is one of the notions that can be demonstrated by Farquhar's dream-like state. Freud notes that he was assisted by dreams in the course of his analyses "by applying to them a new method of psychological investigation which

had done excellent service in the solution of phobias, obsessions and delusions" (Freud, 2014, p. 8). Hence, Farquhar becomes the observer of his dream. He is now in a position like watching a movie in which he is the idolized protagonist. "Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene — perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium" (Bierce, 1995, p. 15). Farquhar's mind has been asleep for too long, psychologically, and physiologically, and has now lost the ability to distinguish the conscious from the unconscious. As he returns home to cherish the embodiment of the idealized self that he has been seeking for a very long time for the comfort of acceptance, a white light surrounds him and everything turns into total darkness. After all of the illusions and distortions that the unconscious constructs, Farquhar awakens from his dream of escape and falls into the hands of eternal sleep.

Conclusion

"An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" is an essential example of the portrayal of a fragmented individual whose unconscious is disoriented as a consequence of the traumatic reality. In his narrative, Bierce emphasizes the inner thoughts and ideas of his protagonist, demonstrating how fragile and unreliable his psyche is. Therefore, in order to examine Bierce's portrayal of the collapsed mind, this study has internalized the Freudian structural model of the psyche. Even though the story begins as an event that is actually happening, it shifts from the present into the state of an illusion created by Farquhar's imagination, hallucination and dream. The narrative functions as a symbol of the protagonist's inner structure and unconscious desires to escape and survive. Being one of the most prominent figures in the field of psychoanalysis, Freud has consistently emphasized the relationship between the unconscious and human behaviors in his studies. According to Freud's studies, it is observed that desires, pleasures, and traumas, all of which lie in the unconscious, come to the surface through action after having been repressed for too long. As a result, the individuals come to a point where they have to deal with the consequences of their actions. From this perspective, the repressed notions lead Farquhar to his final reckoning, which he must pay for with his life. Freud's conceptualization of the unconscious allows to assume the unconscious as a playground that one can wander in any direction. Similarly, in his narrative, Bierce takes the protagonist on a journey of his mind and thoughts through his innovative narrative techniques, exemplified by the use of flashbacks and flash-forwards. The analysis of the psyche has focused on the deconstruction of Farquhar's mind into three aspects: id, ego and superego. In this way, the shifts in time and place of the narrative have been associated in accordance with the switches of the mind in these three structures.

Farquhar's failure to recognize the circumstances in which he finds himself and his inability to accept his impending death cause his unconscious to take control. His ego, the only part of him aware of the occurrence, attempts to save Farquhar from it by measuring it through the reality principle. Therefore, his ego's attempt to create a defence mechanism to escape from the traumatic uncanny experience becomes the turning point of the narrative. Consequently, the ego employs Freud's defence mechanism, the denial. As Farquhar reflects on downfall, the ego denies reality and presents an unreliable illusion from his point of view until the end of the story. Through unreliable narrator and shifts of time and place, Bierce deconstructs the state of fragmentation and disorientation of Farquhar's unconscious. Consequently, Bierce's portrayal of Farquhar's mind functions as an example of Freud's structural model of the unconscious in three dimensions. As the most ruthless and ambitious part of the unconscious, the id's relentless attempts to achieve the pleasure principle (Eros) control Farquhar's desires and goals. The less Farquhar tries to resist, the more power the id gains. Hence, the id puts Farquhar into a sleep-like state and enters a new world. However, the newly created world is nothing but disillusionment. In this world, Bierce's description of Farquhar's wife has a significant role in

the Freudian structure. Freud's emphasis on the influence of the libido as the main force in the individual is reflected in Farquhar's id. Although she is not even named in the narrative (apart from being Mrs. Peyton), she becomes the symbol of Farquhar's desire to live and produce to secure his existence. As a result, Farquhar desperately tries to achieve and embrace her throughout the story. It is this strong desire that enables him to overcome the dangers and threats that he encounters on his way back home. At this point, Farquhar's superego emerges as the primary force to disguise what Freud has conceptualized as "the idealized self". The individual and society have always been intertwined with each other. Moreover, the individuals are expected to fill the roles to which they have been assigned. In the world Brice presents, fulfilling the roles of Confederate society has been a lifelong task for Farquhar. Nevertheless, due to his inability to join any military conflict as a soldier, he has the feeling of failure for not satisfying his community. The distorted world offers him the chance to become the idealized self which he has been dreaming of for too long.

This study has adapted the Freudian structural model of the mind to demonstrate the resolution of the fragmented psyche in Bierce's short story, "An Occurrence at the Owl Creek Bridge". The analysis through the Freudian perspective has enabled the exemplification of the processes engaged in the unconscious in a state of destruction. As a result, Farquhar's unconsciousness not only serves him an escape world but also the fantasy of having a new persona to fulfil expectations as a hero. However, the effort to hold onto the illusions as a stable force loses its ambition as the consequence of reality overtakes the hallucination in this conflict. "Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him" (Bierce, 1995, p. 2). Nevertheless, the cautions presented by Farquhar's id, ego and superego throughout the narrative cannot prevent his inevitable fate from occurring. The destruction, Thanatos, takes a step further to finally get Farquhar both physically and mentally. Thus, after all the stages of his unconscious designs, Farquhar is confronted with the ultimate truth that every individual must accept, death.

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