

An Exploration of Alfred's Bashfulness in Stewart Edward White's *The Girl Who Got Rattled* through Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the character of Alfred in Stewart Edward White's *The Girl Who Got Rattled* through Freud's psychoanalytic framework, specifically examining the roles of the id, ego, and superego in shaping Alfred's bashfulness and bravery. The research uses qualitative content analysis, focusing on key scenes and interactions in the narrative as primary data. By examining Alfred's actions, thoughts, and interactions, particularly with Miss Caldwell, the study identifies how his id emerges in moments of instinctual courage, while his ego mediates these impulses to maintain social propriety. The superego exerts significant influence, restraining Alfred's desires and reinforcing a pattern of bashfulness and social inhibition. Findings reveal that Alfred's inner struggles represent a dynamic interplay between unconscious impulses and social expectations, illustrating the psychological dimensions of his character. Ultimately, this analysis concludes that Alfred's bashfulness and bravery stem from a complex interaction of the id, ego, and superego, shedding light on how characters can embody the multifaceted nature of human personality.

Keywords: Freud; Psychoanalysis; Id; Ego; Superego; Character analysis

Abstrak:

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis karakter Alfred dalam *The Girl Who Got Rattled* karya Stewart Edward White melalui kerangka psikoanalisis Freud, khususnya dalam menelaah peran id, ego, dan superego yang membentuk sifat pemalu dan keberanian Alfred. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis konten kualitatif, dengan berfokus pada adegan-adegan kunci dan interaksi dalam narasi sebagai data utama. Dengan memeriksa tindakan, pikiran, dan interaksi Alfred, terutama dengan Miss Caldwell, studi ini mengidentifikasi bagaimana id Alfred muncul dalam momen keberanian instingtual, sementara egonya memediasi impuls-impuls ini untuk mempertahankan kesopanan sosial. Superego memberikan pengaruh besar, membatasi keinginan Alfred dan memperkuat pola pemalu dan hambatan sosial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pergolakan batin Alfred merepresentasikan dinamika antara impuls bawah sadar dan ekspektasi sosial, memperlihatkan dimensi psikologis karakternya. Pada akhirnya, analisis ini menyimpulkan bahwa sifat pemalu dan berani Alfred berasal dari interaksi kompleks antara id, ego, dan superego, yang menunjukkan bagaimana karakter dapat mencerminkan sifat kepribadian manusia yang berlapis-lapis.

Kata Kunci: Freud; Psikoanalisis; Id; Ego; Superego; Analisis karakter

INTRODUCTION

Literature serves as a mirror to human psychology, reflecting the inner workings of characters and personalities. Psychology researches human behaviours and their causes while literature depicts human behaviour through fiction (Yimer, 2019). In this regard, Stewart Edward White's short story *The Girl Who Got Rattled*, provides a complex character in Alfred, whose bashfulness, courage, and conflict between personal desires and social propriety make him an ideal subject for psychoanalytic exploration. Alfred's interactions, particularly his struggle to assert himself in social and romantic situations while maintaining a protective stance, highlight a tension that resonates with Freud's theories of the id, ego, and superego. By applying Freud's psychoanalytic framework, specifically the three aspects of personality, this paper seeks to delve into the intricacies of Alfred's character as well as the underlying motivations that define his actions and reactions.

According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, one of the most important frameworks for comprehending personality and human behavior is the id, ego, and superego, the three separate but connected parts of the human psyche. Each fundamentally impacts social interaction, moral restraints, and wants that shape conduct. The id stands for the instinctual and primordial aspect of personality that is motivated by the need for instant gratification and pleasure, id is beneath the unconscious mind as a personality component containing negative and libidinal impulses, through a working system of pleasure principle (Evita Yuliatul Wahidah, Yuminah, Moh. In'ami, 2022). It is often linked to aggressive and sexual impulses, operating unconsciously and sometimes conflicting with social norms. In contrast, the ego operates at a conscious level, balancing the id's impulses with reality. It strives for rationality and works as a mediator, maintaining harmony between the individual's internal desires and external expectations. Meanwhile, the superego embodies the ethical standards and moral guidelines of society, urging individuals to act according to social expectations and personal ideals. The combination of Id, Ego, and Superego forms the behavior and personality of an individual, which is represented by their behavior in the society and their interaction with others (Zhang, 2020).

The setting and narrative structure of *The Girl Who Got Rattled* offer an ideal backdrop for exploring these psychological dimensions. The story is set in the American West and captures Alfred's bashfulness, contrasting with his competence as a skilled scout and his admirable bravery when faced with danger. His character is further complicated by his interactions with Miss Caldwell, a young woman whose presence challenges Alfred's internalized social constraints, revealing the struggle between his protective instincts and his intense bashfulness. This duality makes Alfred a unique figure for analysis through the Freudian lens. His id is expressed in moments of instinctual bravery, particularly in scenes of imminent danger where he acts swiftly to protect Miss Caldwell from an attack by Sioux warriors. Yet, his id is repressed in moments of social interaction, especially around Miss



Caldwell, indicating a battle within his psyche that surfaces in expressions of embarrassment, hesitation, and social withdrawal.

Through the character of Alfred, White subtly illustrates the intricate layers of human personality, highlighting the inner conflicts that often go unnoticed in outwardly modest or bashful individuals. Alfred's ego, as seen in his daily interactions with the group, emerges as a dominant force, controlling his impulses and maintaining his composure around others despite internal frustrations and insecurity. His reluctance to voice opinions or engage in confrontations, such as his reaction to Allen's mocking, underscores the ego's role in balancing Alfred's self-preservation with his bashfulness. Furthermore, Alfred's interactions with Miss Caldwell reveal the power of the superego, guiding his behavior to ensure that he adheres to a high standard of respect and restraint, even in the face of attraction or anger. The superego's influence is apparent in his internal struggle to reconcile his deep-seated duty to protect with his inherent shyness, a conflict that adds depth to his characterization.

The conflict between Alfred's instinctual desires and his moral inclinations provides a window into the workings of the id, ego, and superego, especially in the context of his bashfulness and bravery. In White's portrayal of Alfred, we see a character grappling with conflicting drives: his instinct to protect, his social insecurities, and his moral duty. The narrative's climax, in which Alfred and Miss Caldwell are surrounded by Sioux warriors, brings this internal struggle to the fore, with Alfred's ego momentarily suppressed in favor of the id's instinct for survival. During this critical scene, Alfred's repressed bravery surfaces as he attempts to shield Miss Caldwell, setting aside his embarrassment in favor of survival instincts. This moment underscores Freud's assertion that in times of extreme duress, the ego may relinquish control, allowing primal instincts to take precedence. However, the enduring influence of the superego is seen in Alfred's decision to prepare Miss Caldwell for the worst. This choice reflects a protective selflessness that transcends mere survival, suggesting that his moral compass ultimately guides his actions.

While Alfred's protective instinct may be classified as an id-driven impulse, White presents it in such a way that the moral undertones remain evident, reinforcing the complex interplay between these aspects of personality. His bashfulness, which is far from a simple character flaw, serves as a barrier that restrains Alfred's deeper desires, rendering him incapable of expressing his admiration or asserting his own wishes. His hesitance and blushing around Miss Caldwell are outward signs of the superego's restraining influence,

as he prioritizes social etiquette over personal satisfaction. The nuances of his interactions reveal an individual torn between his desires and the constraints imposed by his self-imposed sense of propriety.

The application of Freud's psychoanalytic framework allows for a deeper understanding of Alfred's character and the internal conflicts he encounters throughout the narrative. His bashfulness, often seen as a superficial character trait is, in fact a manifestation of the ongoing struggle between his id, ego, and superego. Each facet of his personality plays a distinct role in shaping his behavior, especially in the presence of Miss Caldwell. White's narrative serves not only as a compelling story of survival and courage but also as a psychological case study that underscores the power of internalized social norms and their impact on an individual's sense of self.

In conclusion, Alfred's character in *The Girl Who Got Rattled* epitomizes the complexity of human personality as articulated in Freud's psychoanalytic theory. His interactions with Miss Caldwell and the challenges posed by the wilderness illuminate his internal struggles that define him. The story invites readers to consider the influence of unconscious desires, social expectations, and moral constraints on an individual's actions, presenting a nuanced portrayal of courage and restraint. By examining Alfred's character through the lens of Freudian theory, this research explores the underlying psychological dynamics that drive his behavior, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of bashfulness and bravery in the face of danger.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method for this study was descriptive qualitative analysis designed to explore Alfred's character in *The Girl Who Got Rattled* through a Freudian psychoanalytic lens. Given the focus on character analysis, this study is interpretative and seeks to provide insights into the psychological aspects of Alfred's behavior, actions, and interactions, particularly through his expressions of bashfulness and bravery around Miss Caldwell. This approach allows an in-depth examination of Alfred's character within the text, contextualized by Freud's model of the id, ego, and superego.

The research design focuses on a close reading of the text to identify and interpret Alfred's thoughts, behaviors, and dialogs that reveal the conflicts among the id, ego, and superego. Content analysis is especially suitable for analyzing literature because it systematically categorizes textual content to identify patterns and themes that may not be

immediately clear. This process requires a detailed, line-by-line examination of the text, focusing on Alfred's words, actions, and responses to various situations. An interpretative approach can help discover the underlying psychological motivations, which are especially relevant given the character-driven nature of the study. The analysis is complemented by secondary sources that elucidate Freud's psychoanalytic theory, providing a theoretical framework within which Alfred's character traits can be analyzed.

The primary research instrument was the narrative text of *The Girl Who Got Rattled*, which served as the foundation for the analysis. The key dialogues involving Alfred are scrutinized for implicit or explicit cues that reflect his internal conflicts. Alfred's interactions with Miss Caldwell, Allen, and the other characters are examined with attention to descriptive language, emotional responses, and actions that align with Freud's conception of the id, ego, and superego. Each personality aspect is thus mapped onto the Freudian framework, using the story as a textual landscape from which relevant examples are drawn and analyzed.

In conducting this analysis, the research procedure was structured as follows. First, the entire story was read in its entirety to develop an overall understanding of the plot, setting, and characters. Subsequently, key passages involving Alfred, particularly those depicting moments of his bashfulness, protective instincts and interactions with Miss Caldwell, are annotated and highlighted. Through these annotations, specific instances were categorized according to Freudian personality elements. For example, Alfred's retreat and blushing around Miss Caldwell were classified under the influence of the superego, reflecting his socially conditioned restraint, whereas his protective, almost primal instincts in confronting the Sioux were attributed to the id.

The next phase of the procedure involved a deeper analysis during which each identified instance was examined within the broad framework of Alfred's character arc. For instance, passages illustrating his bashfulness were analyzed not only for surface behavior but also to explore how they signify internalized social expectations and fears of judgment. At this stage, each action was cross-referenced with Freudian theory, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in established psychological concepts. This allowed the study to draw nuanced connections between Alfred's behaviors and his psychoanalytic motivations. Finally, the analysis culminated in synthesizing these findings to provide a cohesive narrative that embodied Alfred's psychological complexities. By aligning textual analysis with Freudian principles, this study illuminates Alfred's character as a

multidimensional figure shaped by conflicting psychological forces within the narrative framework.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research reveal the psychological complexity of Alfred's character in *The Girl Who Got Rattled*, demonstrating how his bashfulness, courage, and inner conflict align with Freud's psychoanalytic concepts of the id, ego, and superego. Through a close reading of key scenes, it becomes evident that Alfred's behavior is a product of competing impulses, each driven by distinct psychological forces that highlight his inner struggle with societal expectations and instinctual desires.

Id

Alfred's id, the part of his psyche focused on instinctual needs and survival, becomes most apparent during scenes of danger, particularly when he and Miss Caldwell are surrounded by Sioux warriors. This primitive survival instinct overrides his usual bashful demeanor, shifting suddenly from his typically passive character to one capable of swift, decisive action. For instance, Alfred's usual embarrassment around Miss Caldwell disappears. Instead, he becomes assertive, taking control of the situation by calmly instructing her what to do if they are captured. This newfound assertiveness reveals the id's primal drive for protection and survival, pushing aside his customary deference and showing raw courage that surfaces only under threat.

Ego

Alfred's ego serves as the balancing force that helps him navigate social expectations while managing his internal desires. In everyday interactions, particularly those involving Miss Caldwell and her fiancé Allen, Alfred's ego mediates his social discomfort and repressed romantic interest. His decision to remain in the background and avoid confrontation, even when Allen taunts him, highlights the ego's role in maintaining harmony within his social environment. While Alfred may feel irritation or a desire to assert himself, his ego restrains these impulses and prevents him from acting on feelings that could disrupt the group's dynamics. This restraint aligns with Freud's view of the ego as a rationalizing force that helps individuals adapt to reality, showing Alfred's ability to adapt his behavior to social norms, even at the expense of his personal desires.

Superego

Alfred's superego, embodying his moral and social conditioning, is strongly evident in his interactions with Miss Caldwell, where he displays deep respect and self-imposed restraint despite his apparent feelings for her. His bashfulness around her is an outward sign of the superego's influence, inhibiting him from expressing his feelings and encouraging him to maintain propriety. This internalized moral compass causes him significant discomfort, as he often blushes and avoids direct engagement with Miss Caldwell, even at the expense of a personal connection. For example, when Alfred is mocked or embarrassed, he chooses to retreat rather than defend himself, suggesting a deeply ingrained desire to avoid any behavior that might seem improper. This shows how his superego enforces social expectations and represses his id's instinctual desires, creating an ongoing inner conflict between duty and unspoken emotions.

Alfred's bashfulness functions as a protective mechanism that allows him to uphold his sense of decorum and avoid potentially compromising interactions with Miss Caldwell. His inability to assert himself reflects the superego's influence over his behavior. When Alfred blushes or stammers around Miss Caldwell, his superego overrides the id's desire for romantic expression, reinforcing his socially conditioned beliefs about propriety. For Alfred, bashfulness acts as a psychological defense that keeps him within the bounds of acceptable behavior, even as it isolates him from emotional satisfaction. This restraint ultimately manifests as an unresolved tension, evident in his discomfort around her and his tendency to delay to others when offering opinions or asserting himself. The clash



between Alfred's id and superego generates a tension that permeates his actions and interactions. His instinctual desire to protect Miss Caldwell, driven by the id, competes with his superego's insistence on restraint, creating a nuanced internal conflict. This conflict is most obvious during the climax when he prepares for a potentially fatal confrontation with the Sioux. Here, his id-driven protective instinct overpowers his usual restraint, revealing raw, primal courage that lies dormant under his typically shy demeanor. Despite the circumstances, Alfred's superego remains present; he resolves to protect Miss Caldwell even if it means acting outside his comfort zone, which suggests a deep-seated commitment to duty and respect.

The findings suggest that Alfred is a character of hidden complexity, whose inner world shaped by a dynamic interplay of Freud's id, ego, and superego. This psychological framework highlights how Alfred's bashfulness and bravery are more than personality traits; they are responses to internalized social values and survival instincts. His behavior aligns with Freud's assertion that individuals are shaped by unconscious desires and socialized expectations, resulting in personality that is driven by both instinctual needs and moral constraints.

Alfred's character reveals the psychological impact of repression, as his id's desires for personal satisfaction and connection are continually suppressed by his superego's strict adherence to propriety. This repression manifest as bashfulness, preventing him from fully expressing his desires and keeping him emotionally distant from Miss Caldwell. Freud's theory suggests that such repression can lead to internal tension and discomfort, which Alfred experiences as social awkwardness and hesitancy. His story illustrates how repression can hinder personal fulfillment, especially when individuals' moral ideals and social conditioning limit their capacity to pursue genuine connections.

Furthermore, the id's influence during moments of crisis underscores the primal aspects of Alfred's character, showing that even deeply ingrained social behaviors can be overridden by instinctual drives. His shift from bashfulness to assertiveness during the Sioux attack revealed the id's capacity to temporarily take precedence over the superego when survival is at stake. This supports Freud's theory that the ego may give way to the id in times of extreme stress, allowing instinctual behavior to surface. Alfred's experiences highlight how the id, though often repressed, remains a powerful force within the psyche, influencing behavior when other aspects of personality are momentarily weakened.

Ultimately, Alfred's character serves as a case study of the tension between personal desires and social expectations, with Freud's psychoanalytic model offering a valuable lens through which to understand his internal conflicts. By analyzing Alfred's bashfulness and bravery as manifestations of the id, ego, and superego, this study provides insight into the complexities of personality and the ways in which inner psychological forces shape human behavior.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of Alfred's character in *The Girl Who Got Rattled* through Freud's psychoanalytic framework highlights the intricate layers of human psychology that drive his behavior, particularly his expressions of bashfulness and bravery. By examining his actions through the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego, it becomes clear that Alfred's personality is shaped by an ongoing struggle between instinctual desires, rational self-regulation, and deeply ingrained moral standards.

The id emerges in Alfred's primal courage, which surfaces in moments of life-threatening danger, as he instinctively protects Miss Caldwell from harm. This courage, dormant in his day-to-day interactions, reveals the hidden strength of his instinctual drive to survive and protect, demonstrating Freud's concept of the id as a powerful force that can override social constraints in critical situations. Meanwhile, his ego serves as a mediator, restraining his impulses and helping him navigate social situations without compromising his propriety. This balance is evident in Alfred's everyday interactions, where his ego helps him maintain his bashful, non-confrontational demeanor, avoiding unnecessary conflict even when provoked by Allen.

The superego, however, exerts the most significant influence over Alfred's personality, as it continually enforces a strong sense of social decorum and self-restraint. Alfred's bashfulness and hesitation around Miss Caldwell reflect his internalized values, which prioritize respect and propriety over personal desires. His struggles with expressing his emotions and asserting himself reveal the tension between his inner drives and his moral compass, which Freud would describe as the superego's role in shaping behavior according to societal ideals.

Ultimately, Alfred's character exemplifies the complexity of human psychology and the multifaceted nature of personal identity. His story illustrates how individuals navigate the demands of social expectations while reconciling them with innate desires and moral

principles. By applying Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this research offers a deeper understanding of Alfred as a character constrained by inner conflicts yet capable of profound bravery. His journey, therefore, provides valuable insights into the ways in which psychological forces influence behavior, highlighting the tension between our hidden desires and the ideals we strive to uphold.

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