

Salley Vickers' *Where Three Roads Meet* as Metaleptic Retelling of the Oedipus Myth

Oedipus Mitinin Metaleptik Yeniden Anlatımı Olarak Vickers'ın *Üç Yol Ağızı*

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Abstract

Considering the fact that postmodern literature is an intertextual field which the reader reinterprets the text in an ongoing process, it is evident that referring to the past, particularly ancient myths through various writing strategies is becoming highly popular. Within the framework of this understanding, Salley Vickers attracts attention with *Where Three Roads Meet*, where she retells the Oedipus myth, published in 2007 by Canongate Publishing House. The author blends the ancient myth with the Oedipus complex that Freud introduced to psychoanalysis, transforming it into a masterfully constructed contemporary myth that oscillates between the fantasy world of myth and Freud's era. This study's primary aim is to examine Vickers' various narrative techniques in rewriting the ancient myth, particularly metalepsis. In this respect the study also focuses on the author's existential, psychological, philosophical, and fantastic interpretation approaches to constructing her postmodern work. Finally, in her metaleptic version based on the one-to-one dialogue between Freud and the narrator, this study concludes that Vickers deconstructs the myth tradition and creates an illusion effect on the reader that suspends thanks to the ambiguity and multi-layeredness composed in the narrator's core and throughout the account.

Keywords: Salley Vickers, *Where Three Roads Meet*, Retelling, Metalepsis, Mise en abyme

Öz

Post modern edebiyatın, okurun metni sürekli yeniden yorumladığı metinlerarası bir alan olduğu düşünüldüğünde, çeşitli yazma stratejileriyle geçmişe, özellikle de antik mitlere atıfta bulunmanın oldukça popüler hale geldiği açıktır. Bu anlayış çerçevesinde Salley Vickers, 2007 yılında Canongate Yayınevi tarafından yayımlanan Oedipus mitini yeniden anlattığı *Where Three Roads Meet* ile dikkat çeker. Yazar, antik miti Freud'un psikanalize kazandırdığı Oedipus kompleksiyle harmanlayarak, mitin fantezi dünyası ile Freud'un dönemi arasında gidip gelen, ustalıklı kurgulanmış çağdaş bir mite dönüştürür. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Vickers'ın başta metalepsis olmak üzere antik miti yeniden yazarken kullandığı çeşitli anlatı tekniklerini incelemektir. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, yazarın post modern eserini inşa ederken kullandığı varoluşsal, psikolojik, felsefi ve fantastik yorumlama yaklaşımlarına da odaklanmaktadır. Son olarak, Freud ve anlatıcı arasındaki birebir diyaloga dayanan metaleptik versiyonunda, Vickers'ın mit geleneğini yapı bozuma uğrattığı ve anlatıcının merkezinde ve anlatının genelinde oluşturduğu belirsizlik ve çok katmanlılık sayesinde okuyucu askıya alan bir illüzyon etkisi yarattığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Salley Vickers, *Where Three Roads Meet*, Yeniden anlatım, Metalepsis, Mise en abyme

Introduction

Postmodern literature is an intertextual field in which the reader reinterprets the text in an ongoing process. In this context, with Derrida's reckoning, meaning is infinite and always passes through a different context. (Derrida, 1978). Similarly, for postmodernism, prevailed

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by the idea of the death of the author put forward by Barthes, Rosenau thinks that the search for facts and sources or origins should be abandoned and replaced by an authorless, purely intertextual field where there is no agent (Rosenau, 1992). Foucault, on the other hand, defends the view that the author cannot precede his/her work and that the polysemic texts are reworked and thus disappear in these texts. Finally, the French literary critic, who denotes that we must start by overturning the traditional idea of the author, argues that it does not matter who is speaking in the text (Foucault, 1980). Considering the above information, it is possible briefly to state that “The intertextuality method, which aims to make both the text and the reader active, lays the groundwork for the creation of new texts based on old texts” (Ünsal Ocak, 2018, p. 246).

One of the writing techniques commonly used in contemporary literature and popular culture is metalepsis. It is a term that originated in ancient legal discourse and later coined by Gérard Genette to describe the transitions between the narrative level. The French theorist defines metalepsis as follows: “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse” (Genette, 1980, pp. 234-35). Metalepsis, in general terms, purports the unauthorized transition from one level to another. One of the fundamental distinctions of narrative discourse is the distinction between the level of discourse and the level of story. In this respect, metalepsis comes about when the extradiegetic narrator or reader enters the diegetic world without permission when the diegetic characters make an unauthorized entry into a meta-diegetic world or vice versa, that is, when the meta-diegetic characters violate the diegetic level. Therefore, it may be argued that metalepsis overturns the levels involved in this distinction and questions its validity (Dervişcemaloğlu, 2019). In other words, metalepsis also refers to narratives with more than one narrative world or level, overt or implicit. It only takes place at the borders between these narrative levels when multi-layered narratives tell stories within the story, that is, “world in which one tells, the world of which one tells” (Cohn and Gleich, 2012, p. 236). In metaleptic narratives, where the levels of entirely different worlds are intertwined, simultaneity is created by intervening in the story and the telling time. The objective is to get the reader immersed in the fiction.

Another literary technique frequently used in postmodern literature is the *mise en abyme*, which goes arm with arm with metalepsis. Derived from heraldry, the term comes down being ‘placed in the abyss’ and is considered a technique of placing a copy of an image into itself. Gray explains the term, first used by the French writer André Gide with a similar approach, for modern criticism: “A term for a self-reflexive repetition in a text. [...] The term also suggests infinite regression, such as the design which used to appear on the Quaker Oats packet, on which there was a picture of a man holding a Quaker Oats packet, and so on” (Gray, 1992, p. 181). The term was adopted in deconstructive criticism for occasional glimpses of the ‘dissolving emptiness’ that underlies the endless free play of word meaning.

Examination of the contemporary literary works, obviously affirmed that referring to the past through various rewriting techniques is highly prevalent in postmodern literature. In this context, myths, major sources of inspiration in literature, as in almost all disciplines, becomes effective. Karen Armstrong argues that mythology is an art form that points to the timelessness of human existence beyond history and allows us to step out of the intricate flow of random events and look at the essence of reality. She also claims that when famous philosophers such as Freud and Jung entered the contemporary study of the soul, they instinctively appealed to classical mythology to explain their insights and brought new interpretations to ancient myths (Armstrong, 2005). In this regard, Scottish Publishing House Canongate, adopting the fact that myths form the basis of literature, has started the tradition of retelling myths by commissioning celebrated authors from different

nationalities as of 2005. One of the ancient myths rewritten within the scope of this tradition is the myth of Oedipus. In 2007, Vickers rewrote the classical myth under *Where Three Roads Meet*, presenting a contemporary version of the myth to postmodern literature. Utilizing different writing techniques and strategies, in *Where Three Roads Meet*, the author combines her literary expertise with her analytical psychotherapy knowledge and evaluates the ancient myth from a postmodern perspective. Accordingly, blending the Oedipus myth with the Oedipus complex, which Freud introduced to psychoanalysis inspired by the ancient myth, the author creates a masterful fiction that oscillates between the fantastic world of myth and Freud's time. In her retelling, Vickers amalgamates metalepsis and, *mise en abyme* technique with a self-reflective account. She removes the classical myth, reinterpreted from a psychoanalytic and existential viewpoint, from its monological structure and exposes it to different interpretations. Within this scope, this study explores how Vickers employs narrative devices, particularly metalepsis, in her retelling of the ancient myth. Parallel to this, the study also focuses on the author's presenting a highly contemporary recount from an existential framework and deconstruction of the mythic story.

Vickers' *Where Three Roads Meet* as Metaleptic Retelling of the Oedipus Myth

The mother then of Oedipus I saw,
 Fair Epicaste, that, beyond all law,
 Her own son married, ignorant of kind,
 And he, as darkly taken in his mind,
 His mother wedded, and his father slew.
 Whose blind act heav'n expos'd at length to view,
 And he in all-lov'd, Thebes the supreme state
 With much moan manag'd, for the heavy fate
 The gods laid on him. She made violent flight,
 To Pluto's dark house from the loathed light,
 Beneath a steep beam strangled with cord,
 And left her son, in life, pains as abhorr'd
 As all the furies pour'd on her in hell. (Homer, *The Odyssey* Ch 11, v350[629])

Vickers brings the myth of Oedipus, which inspired various literary texts and turned into an indispensable theory of psychoanalysis by Freud, to the agenda with a striking interpretation in *Where Three Roads Meet*. In the novel, the classical myth is told to Freud, by a mysterious visitor oscillating between different narrative levels. The narrator claims to be the wise seer Tiresias of Thebes; however, it is ironically realized that he suffers from the Oedipus complex. Based on a psychological, philosophical, existential, and fantastic interpretation, the work consists of twenty chapters, including the last stages of Freud's illness. Each chapter is based on the basis of a dialogue between Freud and the stranger who has regularly visited Freud struggling with cancer. In the novel, set partly in pre-World War I London and partly in the world of myth, the Nazis allow Sigmund Freud, suffering from cancer's debilitating effects, to leave Vienna. Taking refuge in England, Freud settles with his family in a house in Hampstead, where he dies about a year later. Having been locked in his room as a result of numerous operations, Freud has difficulty speaking; yet the routine visits of the stranger storyteller revive his health. While telling the famous defender of the Oedipus Complex a story he knows, the mysterious visitor appears in different roles, completely upsetting the narrative coherence. In the novel where the narrative and story levels are violated, the reader has difficulty comprehending whether what is told is real or Freud's imagination on his deathbed. Towards the end of the work, when Freud hesitates about whether what he saw was real or "Not a figment of [my] imagination?" (Vickers, 2007, p. 192), he leaves the reader with a great contradiction. Moreover, and most importantly,

the various roles and overlapping different narrative levels Vickers assigns to the narrator in her masterfully constructed work turns the text into a highly multiplex one. In this context, deploying the metaleptic narrative in her retelling, the author not only confuses the reader but also manages to keep his/her attention alive by involving him/her in the story entirely. Accordingly, there is complete confusion and violation regarding the story's time, thanks to the temporal distortion effect created by the transition to the old period of which the stranger is a part while telling the epic from time to time.

Subtly constructed on different setting and narrative levels, the novel is a blend of the Oedipus myth and the Oedipus complex of the narrator during the difficult seven-year period in the monastery. Deploying principally the ontological metalepsis narrative strategy, which roughly means the narrator's involvement with the story, the author rewrites the ancient myth with a highly contemporary interpretation. In this sense, the novel may also be considered one of the most striking samples of ontological metalepsis, which affirms the fact that the same character cannot occupy two different levels ontologically at the same time. In this context, the incompatible aspects of the two stories told in the novel, in terms of the collision of the narrator's roles in multiple narrative levels simultaneously, indicate a metaleptic narration. Consequently, it is evident that the work consists of two different narrative levels. Thus, the story, in which the narrator tells Freud about his experiences as 'our story' (Vickers, 2007, p. 134), takes place in a metaleptic narrative level covering the pre-World War I London period and the seven-year monastic period of the fantastic myth world.

Within this context, the narrator is in dialogue with Freud as two different characters, both in the myth world and in the monastery where he spent his childhood, in the story on different levels that do not overlap with each other, which he occasionally recounts in the 'mind world,' as he suggests. The stranger begins his story by asserting that he and a 'shepherd' witnessed an 'eagle' bringing a 'baby' on Delphi Cithaeron Mountain when he was at the age of twelve. The author makes an ironic and playful reference to the Oedipus myth at the novel's very beginning. He then adds that he saw a man rolling her mother from his hands to the ground on the line between fantasy and reality. This hand is familiar because of its white mark: it belongs to his father. This time, the author successfully connects the Oedipus complex and the narrator. Before long, the child has faced the bitter truth that his mother is dead. However, he never believed his father's lie about his mother drowning in the river. Eventually, the child finds himself in "the chief sanctuary of the god Apollo" (p. 36) as the stepmother does not want a child who resembles his mother. The narrator continues his story, which he tells unreliably from the point of view of his mind from time to time, after the death of his mother, of going to the monastery for various reasons and living there. The one who suffers from the Oedipus complex first-hand is Tiresias, the blind seer in the ancient myth, with the metalepsis technique that the author utilizes very ingeniously on a different level. The fact that her grandmother wants him to go to the monastery due to his interest in "eagles" indicates that the narrator, who gets his ability to see the future from the eagle, will assume a different identity in the same story as a blind seer. While the narrator is taken to the monastery on the slopes of Parnassus, which will be his home for about seven years, he ironically claims that he learns from his uncle that his full name is "Tiresias" the first time. However, at the same time, from another narrative level, it is understood that he is a little boy with Oedipus complex who hates his father. One of the reasons to be taken to the monastery is, in reality, to protect him from his father. Deploying similar metaleptic writing strategies and word plays in the rest of the work, Vickers depicts the narrator as the seer in the ancient myth and the child with the Oedipus complex, who conflicts with his father and burns with longing for his mother. In this context, towards the end of the eighth chapter, where he is given the task of portraying

the god in the music festival “in memory of Apollo’s return to Delphi” (p. 70) may be considered as the section where the author uses metalepsis highly cunningly. The narrator witnesses snakes mating in the pool while in seclusion for his duties before the ceremony. Then, when he leaves to pee, he encounters the silhouette of a naked woman, and ironically, the first word that comes to his mind is ‘mom.’ The narrator’s following statement is an embodiment of the Oedipus Complex that reflects the unaccomplished mother-son relationship: “The golden snakes coupling in the silver water of the pool and the smell of urine on the wet thyme beneath my bare feet and the new light on the green rushes and the woman’s White body- and my piteous childhood loss” (p. 77). Then he goes blind, just like the seer in the ancient myth. Vickers manages to cunningly blend the story of the blind seer Tiresias in the ancient myth with the character of the boy with the Oedipus complex. In this way, two different identities, which cannot exist on the same narrative level, are attributed to the same character, creating an illusion effect, which is the essential feature of a metaleptic narrative. In the ancient myth, it is told that when young Tiresias comes across two entwined mating snakes, he separates them with his stick and instantly turns into a female. Seven years later, while walking in the forest, the female Tiresias reencounters a pair of snakes mating. Putting his wand between them, he completes the cycle and becomes a male again. There are accounts about Tiresias that this life experience may have unintentionally caused his blindness in both sexes (Servi, 2014).

Exploration of Vickers’s retelling in this regard demonstrates how the author has succeeded in adapting the experiences of Tiresias in the ancient myth to her protagonist at the effective use of a metaleptic narrative level. The author blends Tiresias and the stranger who appears in the role of the son full of hatred towards his father in the story he tells Freud. The one who witnesses mating snakes appears in two roles: Tiresias in the ancient myth and the boy with the Oedipus complex. Thus, the reader’s attention is questioned by the illusion created by presenting the three events of the manifestation of the mother in the form of Athena and the blindness of the oracle after seeing the snakes on the same narrative levels. In her retelling, where a transition between the fictional world and the real world and two separate fictional worlds is accomplished, Vickers pictures the stories and characters in different worlds on the same narrative level. Thus, a kind of simultaneity effect is created in the text, based on the illusion of the reader’s resemblance to reality and caused by an illusion that the reader believes, not disbelieves. As a result, a highly gripping contemporary myth is created, where the time of narration and the time of the story intersect, and the reader stays alert.

In metalepsis, at first glance, the assumption of simultaneity between the telling of the story and the time advancing on the world level does not seem to involve a violation of the level. However, the simultaneous formation reflected here is like a door to the fictional world. Therefore, at this point, a border violation can be mentioned. The levels of entirely different worlds appear to be interpenetrated. Genette argues that while creating resistance to realism with metaleptic strategies, the importance of the limits of creativity that are forced to overcome this is also shown and summarizes the situation as “a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells” (1980, p. 236). The adroitly constructed narrative level in Vickers’ novel, where the author plays with story and narration time and creates the impression of being simultaneous, is the kind that may be considered an affirmation of the ‘sacred’ border between the two worlds in Genette’s argument above. Tiresias, the blind seer who witnesses Oedipus’ unfortunate fate, also tells his own story, claiming that he has experienced similar things. However, they seem like stories told from the same level. In reality, the coincidence of narrative levels in Vickers’ masterfully created fiction does not go unnoticed by the shrewd reader. In Greek mythology, the blind seer Tiresias, the son of Athena’s nymph Chariclo,

plays an essential role in the tragic events involving the protagonists of the Oedipus myth. He declares that the person who would defeat the Sphinx would be presented with the throne of Thebes and that he would marry Iocasta. He also assists Oedipus to learn the secret of his birth. In this regard, Vickers places the blind seer Tiresias, the witnesser of the ancient myth, in the centre with his vivid narratives in her novel. Using the details of the ancient myth ironically and in different narrative levels in her text, the author presents an ingeniously fictionalized reinterpretation both spatially and thematically. In the story from the narrative level of Tiresias, the blind seer makes a kind of confession by making personal comments with word plays while telling the story of the unfortunate Oedipus. In the story that he tells Freud, the narrator includes Oedipus again in a twisting way while sharing his experiences of his student years in the monastery. In this way, he manages to keep the reader's attention and excitement alive in the confusion he creates. This is where his only friend Pythia in the monastery rewarded with the ability to prophesy like the narrator comes in. However, she is cursed and dies due to her prophecy from the god Apollo to a Corinthian client against the rules. Unable to bear the death of his friend, the narrator leaves the monastery and returns to Thebes with the prophecy "Tiresias grieve no more. From this day the deathless ones will speak to you in the song of birds" (Vickers, 2007, p. 86). Re-entering the classical myth from the turning point, the narrator reintroduces the 'cursed' Corinthian who caused Pythia's death, to the story highly strikingly and ironically. The Corinthian is none other than Oedipus, who would become king as a reward solving the Sphinx's riddle after killing King Laius. Through the metalectic narrative, the author encourages the reader to ponder by giving Tiresias and the young man at 'where three roads meet' on his way back to Delphi after leaving the monastery a chance to make ironic comments. Tiresias, who takes all possibilities as "Had I left one hour sooner or later, had I taken this way rather than that, what might have changed, what might have been" (p. 92) into account is in an effort to find a happy ending for the story.

The riddle of the Sphinx told as "what walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three legs in the evening?" (p. 95) as the representation of destruction and evil luck in the classical myth, is outstanding in regard to its connection with the fate of the unfortunate Oedipus. Known for his sharp wit and bad luck, Oedipus gives the correct answer and explains: "man crawls as a baby, walks upright in maturity and in old age creeps by with the aid of a stick" (p. 95). Eventually, at the end of the novel, the author reminds the reader that the riddle of the Sphinx has come true with a fiction that coincides with the story in the ancient myth. The fate of the hapless Oedipus is bounded by his name, meaning "swollen feet," and the number "three." Upon a cursed prophecy, baby Oedipus is left to die by being chained to his feet. When the adoptive mother sees the poor baby's miserable feet, she names him Oedipus, meaning "swollen feet." Unable to escape his fate, Oedipus kills his father "where three roads meet" and has sexual intercourse with his mother thus ensuring the fulfilment of the prophecy. Finally, facing the facts, Oedipus cannot stand all this and blinds himself with the gold pins in his "mother-wife's" collar. The unfortunate blind "son-husband," Oedipus, needs a cane to walk, just like the "three" legged final form of human beings in the riddle of the Sphinx. The narrator tries to explain the situation from an existentialist point of view, which Sartre describes as "a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity" (1966, p. 24) along the fine line between fate and choice. The tragedy of Oedipus in the ancient myth is based on his desire to know what he should never have known. Could Oedipus have lived happily unaware of everything if he had not been so questioning about his birth parents? Within this frame, Oedipus's suffering parallels Bohlmann's assessment about where Sartre saw the origin of suffering: "Sartre sees the origin of anguish in the feeling of a being which is not responsible for its origin or

the origin of the world, but which, because of its dreadful freedom to choose one form of action over another, is responsible for what it makes of its existence" (Bohlmann, 1991, p. 35). Similarly, Tiresias in the retelling is self-critical thanks to the time violation created. It is a matter of curiosity whether Tiresias, with the gift of prophecy, had ever wondered about the meaning of Oedipus's name or could have solved the mystery. Had he gone to the crossroads earlier or later, could he have prevented all this, or had he preferred the motto "Let well alone" (Vickers, 2007, p. 101). Keeping questioning, in the following chapters, the self-reflective narrator claims that Jocasta, the 'mother-wife' (p. 132), actually knows the truth. Furthermore, the narrator alleges that the queen has many clues by which she might recognize her son. For example, the scars on his legs or the red hair from his infancy are evidence that may reveal his son's identity. Nevertheless, the queen ignores all the signs as she desires to have sex with her son. In essence, the author, through the narrator, re-evaluates the tragic story of the mother-father-son trio in the myth, from another narrative level and with a highly postmodern and existential approach. It is judged whether the fates of the heroes of the tragedy could have been reversed, and this tragedy could have been prevented, either with the outside intervention of the blind seer or with the different choices of the heroes of the tragedy. Thus, the Oedipus Complex, which Freud first put forward in his book *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), inspired by the Greek mythical figure, would have never appeared in psychoanalysis. In a letter to Wilhelm Flies on October 15, 1897, Freud confesses how he developed the concept of the Oedipus complex:

the Greek legend seizes upon a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he senses its existence within himself. Everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfilment here transplanted into reality, with the full quantity of repression which separates his infantile state from his present one. (qtd. in Masson, 1985)

According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the concept of the Oedipus complex is roughly defined as the sum of desires, impulses, and fantasies to possess and have sexual relations with the opposite-sex parent, which creates a sense of rivalry with the same-sex parent (Freud, 1913). The term, mainly used to refer to a stage in the development of young men, coincides with a critical stage in the normal developmental process of the individual. According to Freud, boys around five (phallic stage) who want to have all their mother's love feel jealous of their fathers. Their hatred towards the fathers can lead to a psychodynamic conflict that may cause them to unconsciously wish for their fathers' death. In this context, having been trained as a Jungian analytical psychotherapist, Vickers combines her expertise in the field with her novelist identity and tells the Oedipus complex, the basis of Freud's psychoanalysis studies, through the main protagonist, who has two identities at the same time at the metaleptic narration level.

In the story-within-a-story text, it is found out that the narrator identifies his story with his father, with Oedipus, the unfortunate hero of the ancient myth. From the story's beginning, ironic emphasis is placed on the narrator's rivalry with his father. It is also observed that the narrator's loss of mother in the phallic period and his hatred for the father entirely overlap with Freud's account of the Oedipus complex. The hero's claim from the world of mind that the father killed his mother and he was sent to the monastery after his stepmother's arrival may obviously be regarded as an indication of the conflict between father and son. It is endeavoured to reach a safe conclusion for both sides of the conflict between the same-sex parent and him by sending the child away to the monastery. For example, in his dialogues with Freud, the narrator states that the idea of being sent to the monastery "he also thought of saving [me]" (Vickers, 2007, p. 38) belonged to his grandmother, and he reveals the father-son conflict. Alternatively, in the same chapter, the cathartic confession of the stranger as "my father might well have murdered me too" (p. 36)

in his dialogues with Freud, may also be considered as the embodiment of the father-son conflict. Freud's ironic 'or you him' answer to confession is also significant in that it resembles the unfortunate fate of Oedipus. Dylan Evans' argument in the *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* about the Oedipus Complex may be regarded as the affirmation of the father-son conflict in Vickers's retelling. The author explains Lacan's approach to the Oedipus complex, asserting that the evolution of the father figure is responsible for the fate of the Oedipus complex and that the child desires the mother regardless of gender, and therefore the father is a hindrance. Evans states that the evolution occurred when the father intervened in the dual relationship as a third link as follows:

By promulgating the incest taboo in the second time, the imaginary father is seen to deprive her of this phallus. Lacan argues that properly speaking, this is not castration but privation. However, Lacan himself often uses these terms interchangeably, speaking both of the privation of the mother and of her castration. (Evans, 1996, p. 23)

The panoramic analysis of the novel displays that the narrator composes a plot in which he identifies himself with the hero while witnessing the experiences of the myth hero in the story told. In both stories, the boys are rejected by their fathers and obsessed with their mothers. King Laius never wanted to have a son. Therefore, he deprived his wife of the feeling of motherhood. Even if he unintentionally caused the birth of a boy, he sought a way to get rid of him with the excuse of an evil fortune prophecy. Similarly, a father figure wants to get rid of the son in the modern version of the myth, which creates an illusion effect on the reader with a metaleptic narrative that partially overlaps each other from the world of the mind. The situation of the unfortunate Oedipus, who, upon the fulfilment of the prophecy, finally goes to his mother's bed and makes her bear a child, corresponds to the subconscious manifestation of the mother in the naked female silhouette of the strange narrator in Vickers' version. The narrator's statement that "I felt sick with a fever and the Pythia took me into her bed [...] I sucked it in her arms like a baby" (Vickers, 2007, p. 84) may again be regarded as a result of image of a woman substituted for a mother.

In this context, the analysis of the text with regards to its psychological dimension highlights that Vickers gives a chance to analyse and interpret both the narrator and the mythical figure Oedipus by blending him with the Oedipus complex, simultaneously with the role of the blind seer Tiresias. Telling the interpenetrated stories from different narrative levels with two overlapping identities to the topic expert Freud gives the narrator a chance for catharsis and awareness. The story that he claims to be 'the story of the two of [us],' is in reality the story of three people: Oedipus in the myth, the narrator himself, and Freud the one who knows the story of both. Taking credit for himself through the ancient story, the stranger questions his evil destiny. Thus, by abstracting the ancient myth from its monological discourse, the author prioritizes a dialogic account that the reader can question with a highly postmodern approach and succeeds in making the unquestionable story of the ancient myth exposed to different interpretations. Bakhtin argues that "By its very nature the epic world of the absolute past is inaccessible to personal experience and does not permit an individual, personal point of view or evaluation" (1992, pp. 14-16). He explains the dialogic structure of the novel as follows: "[e]very novel is a dialogized system made up of the images of 'languages,' styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language" (p. 333). Within this frame, the final cursed prophecy in the ancient myth is discussed in detail and explored in all its aspects. Different endings are explored with alternative solutions from a sceptical and experimental view of the narrator. Accordingly, in her novel, written from an existentialist perspective, Vickers aspires to draw attention to the bitter contradiction between fate and choice. In the novel, she opens to interpretation through the narrator, the author rebels against the fatalistic point of view by

displaying different approaches to the tragic end of the classical myth. Thus, it is observed that the narrator tries to reverse Oedipus's the cursed fate, with whom he identifies himself, through different option presentations, and to create an entirely different ending. In this regard, changing Oedipus' destiny represents changing his destiny as well.

The dominant metalepsis narrative strategy emphasized since the beginning of the text goes in hand with a concept taken from art theory, *mise en abyme*. It is stated by Bloom that "In the field of literary criticism, André Gide borrowed from heraldry the term *mise en abyme* to define the property of certain paintings in which a convex mirror reflects the scene in the picture, or the fictions in which a text-within-the-text echoes the main narrative" (2007, p. 228). Considering the above conception, it is evident that Vickers generates a new fictional order in her version of retelling of the myth with cunning puns and temporal and spatial distortions. This new order and retelling are formed through the *mise en abyme* technique, and metalepsis. It is observed that the analogy between the plot and the subplot in the work shows parallelism with the definition as "any [smaller] part of a work that resembles the larger work in which it occurs" (Nelles, 2010, p. 312). Moreover, the analysis of the novel with respect to the *mise en abyme* technique, based on an explicit piece-whole analogy, as mentioned above, clearly indicates the existence of two pieces in the work that resemble the main text. The novel depends on telling two sub-stories intertwined in the main plot. Accordingly, the sub-story[s] displays apparent analogousness with the main plot concerning the thematic and structural features. The main plot of the work is based upon the storytelling of a stranger narrator with regularly visits to the famous psychoanalyst Freud for about a year before he dies. This story is the amalgamation of the myth that formed Freud's theory and the Oedipus complex of which the narrator is a part. Direct association of the narrator with the ancient myth and the Oedipus complex is also very significant with respect to the author's cunning intelligence and skill in using language. In her retelling, the author presents the narrator as both the blind seer Tiresias, personally witnessed the unfortunate hap of Oedipus in the epic's fantastic world, and the young boy in the phallus period, the victim of the Oedipus complex who oscillates between the time of Freud and the time of fantastic myth. In this respect, the work draws attention with its apparent parallels between the events and the hero. The hero in the main plot goes to the fantastic world of myth via the story he tells, as Tiresias, the key figure of the myth. As a blind seer who witnesses the myth first-hand, attains the right to interpret the story told with the illusion he strives to create. Thus, it is possible to review what happened in the classical myth on the same narrative level as Freud, the expert on the main plot. Accordingly, the determination to explore a new version of the classical myth, on this narrative level where fantastic heroes are set free to question their deeds and thoughts may obviously be perceived. In addition, it can be asserted that employing the *mise en abyme* technique, the author successfully brings the roles of the foreign narrator overlapping with the sub-story into reality. Thanks to the temporal harmony created in the main story level with the roles in the narrated sub-story, the reader gets lost in the stories that have penetrated each other. In the main plot the protagonist manages to fascinate the reader, as describing the roles of both the oracle and the adolescent with the Oedipus complex who clashes with his father in the sub-story he tells, in a language unique to the fantasy world. In stories that are highly parallel to each other, the narrator also creates an opportunity to go back to the main story level and comment on the myth and the Oedipus complex through the dialogue with Freud. In this context, the sub-story reflects the main plot, just like in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, the main difference here is that even though the narrator, the protagonist of the plot, oscillates in different story levels, the reader is hesitant about not believing the illusion effect created. Although the stories take place at different times and obviously in different settings from the main story, the

narration level confusion composed by metalepsis ensures that the reader is deeply immersed in the fiction.

Conclusion

In *Where Three Roads Meet*, Salley Vickers handles the Oedipus myth from a new perspective. Having been specialized in analytical psychotherapy, the author, offers a multi-layered rewriting blending the Oedipus myth with the Oedipus complex. The author emphasizes the conflict in the mother-father-son triangle by assigning a metaphorical title, *Where Three Roads Meet*, at the very beginning. This conflict is first introduced in the myth of Oedipus. After ages, it has transformed into a theory as the basis of Freud's psychoanalytic argument and has become one of the essential reference sources of literature. The author subtly combines these two epochs with the contemporary era of the reader.

In her retelling, Vickers frees the ancient myth from its monologic structure and presents it from various perspectives, such as psychological, philosophical, fantastical, and existentialist. Through a highly contemporary approach, she transforms classical myth into a dialogic one in which the reader may also be a part. Vickers's version is based on the one-to-one dialogue between Freud and the narrator, who appears in different roles and at different narrative levels. Consequently, basing her text on self-reflective narration and deconstructing the mythic story, the author deploys metalepsis, a frequently used technique in postmodern literature. Vickers appoints her protagonist as the narrator simultaneously and thus creates an illusion effect on the reader. In view of this, the author attributes him to different roles: both as Tiresias, the blind seer in the fantastic world of myth, and as man suffering from the Oedipus complex oscillating between different worlds. Thus, through her masterfully constructed plot with polyphonic narrative strategy, her retelling presents the hero's evil fate in the epic and the transformation form of the myth into theory in the contemporary world. Furthermore, using "three roads" and "swollen feet" as the recurring motif of her novel, the author handles the Oedipus myth and complex from an existential perspective. The metaphorical 'three' motif in the text is manifested as a symbol of the inevitable fate of humankind and Oedipus with the cursed prophecy. Temporal distortion and intertwining at the narrative level in the fantastic world of myth and Freud's time may be regarded as a direct reflection of the use of metalepsis.

The act of disbelief is suspended thanks to the ambiguity and multi-layeredness created in the narrator's core and throughout the account. The sudden transitions of the narrator between the myth world and the narration time construct simultaneity. The novel is constructed on a complex plot based on an amalgamation of the Oedipus myth and the Oedipus complex, inspired by the ancient myth. The similarity of the part-whole is the demonstration of the concept of *mise en abyme* within the novel. The other noteworthy aspect of the novel is that the author treats the ancient myth from an existential and psychological viewpoint thanks to the narrator's involvement in the story through ontological metalepsis. Thus, in the contemporary version, the myth is explored from a Freudian perspective while contemplating the fine line between fate and choice with an existential approach. In the retelling, exposed to interpretation from different perspectives and narrative strategies, the author strengthens her hand by deploying the dialogic feature of the novel emphasized by Bakhtin. Consequently, Vickers' metaleptic retelling allows for reconsideration of Oedipus' cursed fate in the ancient myth through the sceptical viewpoint of the narrator with alternative solutions and different endings.

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