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A Psychoanalytic Study of Civil War Combatants and Postwar Citizens in Olu Obafemi's *Wheels*

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Abstract

The traumatic experiences of the Nigerian Civil War continue to resonate in the minds of literary writers and the people that witnessed the unpleasant theatrical phenomenon and the remote political turbulence, coups and counter-coups that preceded it. Although the war ended decades ago, the psychological reflections of the traumatic episodes are re-activated by similar occurrences that characterized Nigeria's national life today. This paper examines the psychological sufferings of combatant civil war survivors and postwar citizens created by the psychopathic personality disorders of top military officers and political leaders as captured in Olu Obafemi's *Wheels*. The study adopts Freudian psychoanalytical approach that focuses on the unconscious minds of the author and characters in literary works, using descriptive and analytic methods. It explores the mindset of characters to ascertain the factors that influenced their motives and actions in the chosen text. Findings show that politicians and superior military officers have

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psychopathic disorders which influence their thoughts and actions in the society. They exhibit excessive instinctual drives for sexuality, material wealth, exploitation and oppression without being sensitive to the plights of their subordinates and the masses. It is argued that the uncontrollable desires of these psychopaths trigger the psychic and emotional conflicts experienced by Musa, Kofo, and other characters in Giro community. The paper concludes that Musa's unpleasant experiences during the civil war majorly influenced his actions in the novel.

Keywords: Postwar, combatants, motivations, actions, psychopathy

Introduction

The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) created immeasurable traumatic experiences that will continue to resonate in the minds of literary writers and people who witnessed the unpleasant theatrical phenomenon and the remote events that triggered it. Though the war ended decades ago with “no victor, no vanquished” mantra, the psychological reflections of the traumatic episodes are re-activated by similar preceding occurrences such as the Niger Delta Militancy, armed banditry in Northern Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herdsmen invasion, Pro-Biafra agitators, and so on, that characterized our national life today. With several of the principal actors and witnesses to the theatre recounting their fragmented experiences for onward transmission and re-evaluation, writers resolve to chronicle some of the happenings in their writings to deconstruct the past abnormalities and reshape the future. Since literature mirrors and chronicles events in society, African writers especially those from Nigeria often view things in retrospect so as to evaluate present developments and champion corrective measures. Nigerian writers whose works captured the experiences of the civil war include Festus Iyayi, Elechi Amadi, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chukwuemeka Ike, Isidore Okpewho, Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Buchi Emecheta and Kole Omotoso, to mention but a few. Though different scholarly works abound on the war specifically the psychoanalytic study of postwar characters in fictional works, this study attempts to examine the psychological sufferings of

combatant civil war survivors and postwar characters in Nigeria as captured in Olu Obafemi's *Wheels*.

The military in every nation is saddled with the responsibility of protecting its territorial integrity and maintenance of national security among other functions. Since Nigeria gained her political independence in 1960, corruption has been on the increase and this adversely affects all facets of life of the nation. It was generally believed that political office holders were the breeders of corruption in Nigeria but the intervention of the military into politics in January 15, 1966 has shown that this cankerworm has not only penetrated every aspects of our social lives but also militates against economic growth and development. Corruption appears to be an epidemic that creates havoc in the world especially in developing countries including Ghana, South Africa, Togo, and Nigeria to mention but a few. Since Nigeria became an autonomous nation, the general impression of majority of the populace is that politicians are notorious for sharp corrupt practices such as embezzlement, looting of public treasury, inflation of contracts, electoral fraud and forgery, among others. These and other reasons informed the military intervention in politics in developing countries specifically Nigeria. However, the supposed corrective regimes headed by superior military officers have also been indicted of corruption like their civilian counterparts. The civil war was fought under the military administration of General Yakubu Gowon and this also gave room for top military officers to indulge in corrupt practices to the detriment of the masses. These military officers are perceived to exhibit psychopathic personality disorders resulting in exploitation, injustice, insecurity, and underdevelopment amongst others in society. The thrust of this paper is not to delve into the historical antecedents of the Nigeria Civil War but to examine psychological sufferings of combatant Civil War survivors and postwar citizens created by the psychopathic personality disorders of top military officers and political leaders as captured in Olu Obafemi's *Wheels*

Literature Review

Studies have been carried out by past researchers in the areas of military in politics, corruption, political instability, disillusionments, and

Nigerian civil war, to mention a few. However, no significant studies have been done previously by scholars on psychoanalytic study of combatant Civil War survivors and postwar citizens created by the psychopathic personality disorders of top military officers and political leaders as captured in Olu Obafemi's *Wheels*. This review will focus mainly on critical works on the military in Nigerian politics and corrupt practices to have insight into the analysis of their behavioural patterns and effects on other characters in society. For instance, on the subject of corruption, Okunola, Umaru and Hassan (2019:164) examine the manifestations and impacts of corruption on democratic governance in Nigeria. They argued that "corruption is the bane of Nigeria's underdevelopment such that it has eaten deep into all facets of the Nigeria society." The scholars further posited that:

Corruption is the most serious cause of financial crisis experienced by developing nations immediately after independence and indeed part of the causes for military intervention of January 15, 1966 in Nigeria. The abundance of wealth and resources of the nation has little or no impact on the lives of the people, as majority live in abject poverty.

This research adds value to the current study since it interrogates the effects of corruption on the masses. Okunola, Umaru and Hassan (2019:165) acknowledge Mimiko (1998) whose study traces the institutionalization of corruption in Nigeria to the Babangida's military dictatorship when he argued that under the eight year-rule of Ibrahim Babangida corruption was more legalized as government itself took the lead in what became known as the "settlement syndrome". Corruption as of today has become a norm, the effect of military rule and their civilian collaboration over the years such that it has become part of the Nigerian society. Mimiko's investigation illuminates the current study that traces the origin of corruption to military government which still affects individuals and society at large.

Moreover, Eme and Umeokafor (2019:54) affirmed the assertion of Nwakanma (2003) who explains corruption as illegal,

unethical and often criminal acquisition of wealth or benefits by individuals whose main motive is ego bossing and self-aggrandizement with its attendant negative consequences on the rest of the society. This correlates with the findings of Ogbeidi (2012:1) which explored the corrupt tendencies of the political leadership class in Nigeria since 1960 and its implication for socio-economic development. It argues that political leadership and corruption were interwoven. According to the scholar, “Military leaders improve their personal financial condition by frequent involvement in the economic system. To do this, they seek close working relations with local and foreign businessmen. The military managers secure business environment while businessmen provide capital and entrepreneurial skills (7). Ogbeidi’s findings have revealed that the military leaders are so corrupt that they involve in political and economic activities to acquire wealth and riches to the detriment of their subordinates as well as the citizens they are supposed to protect. In responding to the foregoing, Muhammad and Liman (2018:42) states that; “the military regimes in the country have failed both in the economic and political fronts. In the economic sphere each military regime had exhibited similar symptoms implying that each suffered from similar diseases. The symptoms include declining production of major export crops, deterioration in the balance of payment, declining government revenues that coupled with increasing expenditure lead to inflation, budget deficits and a fall in value of national currency as well as inability of the state to provide electricity to power country’s industries.” The findings of this scholar give insight into the current study in relation to the effects of military corruption in society as depicted in Obafemi’s fictional work.

Literary scholars also interrogate military politics and corruption in their studies. For instance, Asika (2011:272) in his work examines one of the peculiar events in the history of Nigeria, the era of military dictatorship as portrayed in Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* and Helon Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*. The scholar argues that writers reflect the hard socio-political as well as religious and economic realities of the people. The study aims at re-directing the society unto its peace, unity, harmony and peaceful co-existent. It is also to save the past events from a humanistic point of view for the

generation yet unborn unlike the historian who deals only with facts and figures. The focus of the study, thus, is to determine and explore how the writers (Achebe and Habila) capture and collectively documented their individual feelings during that era of blood, tyranny, oppression, brutal killing, terror and alarming rate of corruption, the era of military dictatorship in Nigerian politics. The research correlates with the current work but our focus will be on the effects of the psychopathic personality disorders exhibited by military and political leaders on civil war combatants and the masses in society.

Also, Onwuka (2012:40) investigates military characters (and their conduct) in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrow of Rain* in order to highlight the personality traits associated with soldiers in politics. The scholar argues that military leadership is among the worst challenges in African countries; therefore, a deeper understanding of military characters and their conduct would aid society respond appropriately to it in future. The above study adds value to the current work as it examines the behaviours of the military and the psychological effects on their subordinates and the Nigerian citizens in general. The study carried out by Diakhate (2019:1) explores the objectivity of Nigerian writers by portraying the ups and downs of their society, with a focus on Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The scholar argues that the authors have done a diagnosis without complaisance of the bottlenecks that impede Nigeria from moving forwards. The study also demonstrates that feminist activism can challenge a political military power. It concludes that violence at university, social injustice, corruption and mediocrity are the evils that characterized the Nigerian society. These reviewed studies illuminate the current work since they focus on military in politics and corruption in society. However, our attention shall be shifted to the psychoanalytic study of combatant Civil War survivors and postwar citizens in society.

The study is library-based and so the literary text is purposively selected due to its thematic relevance and to achieve the aim and objectives of this study. Also, secondary materials that are relevant to the subject matter are consulted, reviewed and also employed to

corroborate arguments and discourse in the textual analysis. The primary text is analysed through descriptive and analytic methods.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach that emanates from his psychoanalysis. This theory can be employed to foreground literary works such as the drama, narrative (prose) and poetry. The application of psychoanalytic theory to "a literary text gives us a profound understanding of the 'unconscious' of the author which is supported by Freud's first theory "primary of the unconscious." The theoretical framework can also be "deployed in the study of characters and their actions in a literary text, and at the same time provides us with a thorough understanding of the nature of man in general (Devarrdgi, 2009:438). Freudian Psychoanalysis tends to explore the unconscious mind of characters and uncover the repressed motives, negative beliefs and symptoms influencing their behavioural patterns. Through this approach, the psychic pains of people are brought to their conscious awareness; it focuses on the unconscious processes of characters; vis-à-vis the internal and intrapersonal conflicts responsible for dysfunctional thoughts and maladaptive behaviours in society.

Basically, the Austrian Neurologist, Sigmund Freud, proposed three structures of the human psyche or personality: Id, Ego and Superego. According to Hossain (2017:43) the Id refers to "a selfish, primitive, childish pleasure oriented part of the personality with no ability to delay gratification. The Ego on its part is the most central part of the human psyche which is organized, realistic and mediates between the instinctual drives or desires of the Id and the Super-ego. In fact, it regulates or controls the excessive and immediate gratification drives of the Id. Super-Ego refers to internalized society and parental standards of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' 'behaviour'. It implies the moderator between the Id and Super-Ego which seeks compromises to pacify both. It can be viewed as our 'sense of time and place'. Through this literary theory, the characters' behaviours, their motivations and dysfunctional thoughts in the chosen text shall be explored and brought to the consciousness of readers.

Olu Obafemi's *Wheels* as a War Novel

The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) ended a few decades ago but the memories of the horrible experiences still linger on in the minds of individuals such as survivors and witnesses of the battle. Several literary works have been written since then to reflect the war and most of these focus on themes and images of death, disillusionment, destruction, casualties, traumatic experiences, afflictions and so on, in poetry, prose and dramatic works. Fictional works that were inspired by the Civil War include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* (1986), Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982), Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* (1982), Kalu Okpi's *Biafra Testament* (1982), Cyprian Ekwensi's *Divided We Stand* (1980), Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* (1976), Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* (1985), Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972) and so on. Olu Obafemi's *Wheels* can also be regarded as one of the war novels since it captures bitter experiences of combatants of the Nigerian Civil War and aftermath effects on citizens. It explores the psychoanalytic discourse of military officers and postwar combatants; the psychological implications of their corrupt practices on survivor soldiers and society at large; and the struggle by postwar children to eliminate the abnormalities and ensure socio-economic transformation.

The novel presents Musa, the protagonist whose wartime experiences are responsible for his psychological conflicts and actions in society. He is a patriotic Civil War combatant that fought gallantly to ensure the unity of Nigeria but he is dismissed from the army after the war ended simply because he had no certificate. During the war, he gets promotions; field officer, Second Lieutenant and also is decorated with medals but after the Civil War, the officer's rank is removed for he had no book certificate, not trained, not commissioned. He is demoted to a mere Corporal and retired with a meagre pension. Musa feels disappointed at the action of the military commanders and political leaders who exploit combatant soldiers and the downtrodden during and after the Civil War and so he resolves to consistently activate the consciousness of his son, Kofo, who in turns awakens the mental

consciousness of his contemporaries about the social injustice, inequality, exploitation and poverty inflicted on the people by those in authorities. The adolescents become aware of the above societal ills and they are moved to reverse the trend with a view to making existence meaningful to citizens. The novel depicts military generals, political and religious leaders as well as business moguls as psychopathic characters who are instinctually driven by lust, greed, extortion, exploitation and excessive desire for material wealth, to mention a few.

Musa's experiences during the Civil War trigger lots of psychological disorders in him and these include hysteria, phobic-anxiety, aggression, thought broadcast, melancholia, anger, post-traumatic stress disorder and psychopathic exhibitions, to mention but a few. Through his narration, readers will likely observe memories that are marred with certain themes and images that influence the foregoing mental and emotional conditions of the protagonist. The intrapersonal and external conflicts that are responsible for the thoughts, motivations and actions of Musa and other major characters in the novel will be examined using the psychoanalytic theoretical approach.

Unjust Dismissal and Psychic Pains

The traumatic eruptions that characterise Musa's experience in *Wheels* are triggered by his unjust dismissal (from the military after the Civil War), injustice and security consciousness, insensitivity, exploitation, geocentricism, politicisation, instinctual drive of gratification, and so on. All these coincidentally expose the psychopathic disorders of superior military officers and politicians that are supposed to be patriotic and foster socio-economic development of the nation. The Freudian theory reveals the layers of the human psyche (Consciousness, Preconscious and Unconsciousness) and the personality structure (Id, Ego and Super-Ego). The human psyche according to Sigmund Freud is divided into three with the *Conscious* level as the aspect of the mind that is aware of all happenings around individuals which they know. The *Preconscious* is that part of the psyche that appears below the Conscious which enables individuals to remember events, actions or things that happened some time ago. Next is the *Unconscious mind* that contains repressed events, experiences, feelings, thoughts, and the like

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that influence the behavioural patterns of individuals when they are thrown-up. It is the repository of repressed unpleasant emotional feelings, traumatic experiences, sexual drives, anxieties and unresolved conflicts, to mention but a few.

In this novel, Musa who is popularly known as Sonja is created as a combatant soldier who has instinctual drives and desires to become a national hero, patriot and nationalist but his ego cannot overcome the Id and reconcile with the Superego. He feels being deceived by his own Id, “the unconscious mind” that drives him and other junior combatants from achieving their dreams of making their nation peaceful and united. The protagonist constantly reflects on his past experiences in the military especially his unjust dismissal after the Civil War in which he fought gallantly alongside other courageous combatants:

Sonja Sonja everywhere I go in our town as I am a retired soldier. I fought in the hot battle line and retired. I did not retire. I did not retire by myself. I was asked to go because having no education, or having very little education – I went up to primary three of those days – the army say make I dey go. The time I dey face hot fire for Abagana and all the book book army officer dem rum under cover, dey no remember say I no read book. (12)

The above reveals that Musa fought gallantly during the Nigeria Civil War in response to the dictates of his Superego, the national call but his expected heroic and glorious honours are given to superior military officers because of his level of education. He obeys the clarion call by the nation, the superego (conscience) to fight for the unity of Nigeria but this same superego of his has been bastardized by superior army commanders who give orders to them in the field. He feels melancholia, becoming thoughtful and always reflecting on his service years before his retirement. He continuously expresses deep regret which triggers his psychological pains. Though he attempts to outlive the past traumatic experiences, the uncontrollable corrupt practices of superior military

officers even after the Civil War opens up his psychic and emotional wounds, thus:

I retired. For all the years of fighting for my country, leaving my newly married wife Abeke behind with no child, no house no money no food no family, they gave me retire benefit of thirty pounds. This is all the money I brought to my faithful wife after three years. I started trading as I can no longer go to the farm. I managed to save little of this money to buy this my machine. (12)

The recurring unpleasant memory of his disengagement from the military creates unresolved conflicts in the protagonist. He perceives his service years as futile and regrettable. However, he sublimates his psychic pains of anxiety, disappointment, anger and emotional distress into something productive which is petty trading with the thirty pounds paid him as retirement benefit. His ability to purchase a motor-bike from his savings also helps to alleviate his emotional disturbances. The author through the character of Musa questions the justice system and level of discipline in the Nigerian army where war veteran combatants are unceremoniously dismissed from the force without special grants to sustain them and their families while the same system allows superior officers to indulge in sharp corrupt practices to achieve personal economic security.

Security Consciousness and Injustice

The problem of insecurity contributes to the emotional disturbance experienced by postwar junior combatants in many developing countries. In *Wheels*, for instance, the writer uncovers Sonja's hysterical disorders when he experiences strange things on his way home from market with his family "in a short distance ahead, about fifty metres away, there was an up-shot of glowing flames, like an ascending satellite. It rose and dropped back to earth. Immediately after, there was a sudden burst of gun-shots" (16). These unexpected occurrences trigger emotional outbreak in the minds of Kofo Ebaje who first reacted "with a wince, and a whimper cry. Then the mother, Abeke, shouted: Yee Paariipaa!" the whimpering son and the agitated mother create

psychic conflicts and emotional instability to Sonja who responds unconsciously, thinking aloud; “Six years ago, it would be an ambush. A sudden attack by the enemy. But this no be war front. This na peace time for poorly maintain road” (16). He loses full control of his thinking faculty and unconsciously reacts without taking a rational decision, retrogressing and attributing the threat at hand to deplorable nature of the roads. He becomes conscious of himself when his wife reminds him of his order for silence to enable him think. This also increases the “flame of rage, almost of the magnitude of the recent flame burst” and so he roars: “Shut up your mouth, one time, woman!!” According to the narrator, at this time Musa becomes conscious of his actions: “Then he realized that he was being hysterical, and gently added, “I sorry, I just dey smell small danger ahead. My six Sonja sense sabi sniff danger, like cat dey smell rat” (16). His continuous reflection on the postwar experiences demoralises him: “Musa was paralysed because, ever since he was discharged from the arm, he had been disarmed. He wondered therefore why some others could be allowed to carry their own guns, and still have the power to issue orders at peace time” (17). Musa’s horrible experience in the hands of the robbers reawakens his memories of the war and his achievements. These however create emotional pains of hopelessness, fear, anguish and anxieties in him. The flight-fight hormone of the character has been activated but he lacks the confidence to confront the enemies as he demonstrated during the Civil War. The gun that gives him power and confidence has been retrieved from him and physical combat is ruled out of the battle before him.

The psychopathic personality disorders of the military officers in this narrative are true reflections of what is attainable in Nigeria because literary works are reflections of experiences and feelings of authors which are portrayed through the fictional characters. Obafemi, in this novel, presents readers with the past memories of the protagonist and connects them to the current situation in his society thereby creating psychological complexities to his personality. Sonja’s unpleasant memories of military officers and leaders during the civil war are vividly reported in the novel. He is emotionally disturbed because of the personal security which junior combatants provide for

their commanders who only fight wars in abstraction. According to the narrator, thus:

His mind roamed back to the war and the injustice of it all became more unbearable than ever before. He remembered the colonels and the Generals who gave all the big big orders. They stayed away in their homes while we went to face the enemy's fire. Generals must not die. If they die, the war ends. As we protected them with our skins, they stayed in their furnished hotels, sometimes fighting the war on the maps in the midst of red wines and in the company of fat-arsed girls. (24-25)

The novelist exposes the uncontrollable instinctual drives of psychopathic military generals in the areas of sexuality, womanizing, luxuries and aggrandizements without considering the multiplier effects on the mental health of other people as exhibited by Musa, his son and in the society. He has created Musa as a civil war veteran with instinctual desire and drives, aspiration and dreams of becoming a military hero and patriotic citizen of his country but the drives of the superior military officers as evidenced in the novel are to become wealthy, powerful and influential in society even after their retirement. While Musa upholds the rules and standards of the Ego ideal by joining the army to maintain national security and protect the territorial integrity of their nation, the top military leaders seem to break the ego ideal which is the image of role model, patriotism, ideal combatants, and so on. The narrative shows that insensitivity is another psychopathic syndrome exhibited by military generals towards their subordinates in the force. Through the mind of the protagonist, we are informed that:

They drank all the brandies and whiskies and the champagnes available in the hotels. As we died in our hundreds and thousands, they increased their own salaries with the money saved from our deaths. As we

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perished under the bridges and in trenches, they got all the elevations, all the promotions, all the praises from the cities where the battle was all rumour and folk-story. (25)

The psychopathic military leaders are not only described as being insensitive but they also display egocentrism and inequality within the force. This contributes to the psychic and emotional pains of Musa as recounted in the novel: “In the comfort of praises, the commanders married new wives and threw big parties. After the war, they got new postings and built better houses. After the war, they got even many more wives and concubines and made many more children to replace the children of the poor ones who have died in the war” (25). This study is not only meant to condemn these foibles but also to expose the abnormalities and build a better future. The protagonist further recounts the action of superior military officers to ensure personal security against potential harm to the detriment of combatants in the war theatre.

The narrative reveals that top military officers, during the civil war exhibit high level of nepotism which has contributed to the posttraumatic experiences of the war combatants. Musa reports that:

The fat rich men whom the colonels gave all the big contracts to supply drugs and ammunition. These fat rich men invited the generals and their wives to big parties during which they negotiated other fat and big contracts. The big rich businessmen gave the generals keys to long cars and dazzling mansions as presents and rewards for the contracts and ground-wetting for new contracts (25).

This describes superior military officers’ drive for instinctual gratification which affects the junior war combatants like Musa and the masses who languish in abject poverty. They display inordinate and inadequate gratification for their material wealth and riches, living in isolated part of the town. Meanwhile, while junior combatant soldiers are relieved of their jobs after the war, their superior officers and

commanders with education certificates live in influence and affluence, awarding contracts and collecting salaries of dead soldiers. This implies that they are basically interested in their personal economic security while the war lasts.

War Casualties and Existentialism

The unpleasant memories of the Civil War casualties especially combatant soldiers who are close friends of Musa also affect him psychologically. Apart from those who died in the battle, some survivors face emotional depression caused by bereavement, hunger and desolation, among others, while a number of them experience “amputations and deformities” as “legacies” of the war. In some cases, wives abandon their husbands to live with their parents or wealthy contractors. The protagonist finds it difficult to overcome this postwar disillusionment which create emotional disturbances to him. He regrettably reports that:

After the war, there were mourning, hunger and desolation in the homes of the other ranks and men who fought and died in the battle. After the war, amputations and deformities were the legacies of numerous families. Wives who could not cope with the hunger and the unsightly returnees ran away to their parents or to the monied contractors who could do with more wives (25).

The psychopathic syndromes of the top military officers and exploiters in the postwar society makes Musa become frustrated, questioning the essence of human existence. He perceives life as futile, meaningless and characterized with hardship, continuous struggle and hopeless. He expresses his emotional feelings: “Wetin be the meaning of dis world sef? ... We wey be other rank and our family, we get notion. Those wey do well, like me, go buy sekon hand cycle. If your money no reach, you get bicycle like Hercules, Rarely, or Robin hood. Na for fillage we all return. No light, no water, no better road and no schools for we children” (26). The excessive instinctual drive for gratification by the

psychopathic characters has created inequalities, injustices and insecurity for “the poor and wretched ex-soldiers, the petty petty traders who carry their wares and their wives on their motor-bikes or the trading women who walk the long roads between the villages and the cities” in society instead of the wealthy citizens (26). The writer, through the character of Musa, bitterly laments the uncontrollable antisocial patterns of military leaders and the bourgeois in our nation who continuously exploit the helpless downtrodden afflicted with sicknesses and hunger. He feels that the exploiters including the wealthy “contractors” are the real cause of “the dangers of the roads” since the abnormal behaviour of the former is the underlying motivation for the actions of the latter in every society. In the text, the protagonist’s pent-up emotion is repressed by his pleasure principle but he condemns the abnormalities triggered by the military officers and their cohorts in society. The repressive self-gratification helps him in the struggle to eradicate injustices, inequality and ensures economic growth and development.

Apprehension, Agitations and Egocentrism

Obafemi presents a society where people are apprehensive, agitating and egotistical because of the attitudes of political leaders and military officers which are inimical to the growth and development of society. So, in the novel Musa often expresses his anger at every slightest provocation by the top military officers who he strongly believes are responsible for the impoverishment of his own family and the masses generally. He aggressively attacks Seun’s father who unknowingly splashes muddy water on his motor-cycle while he is taking his son to school. After this incident, Musa’s thoughts continue to flow from one subject to another; as he cautions his son, Kofo about the consequence of lateness, reflecting on a tragedy that befell his friend during the civil war. The message of punctuality creates emotional conflict in the mind of Kofo as he starts panting when he gets to school late. Three factors actually trigger his emotional conflict in the narrative and these include the unconscious thought of his lateness and the punishment to be given to him. Yet another source of his phobic-anxiety in the novel is Sonja’s story about his friend that died for lateness. Thirdly, there is the thought

of Seun's questions during the Arithmetic lesson. The foregoing conditions contributed to the wandering thoughts and the emotional pains that later influence the actions of the character in his struggle to activate the consciousness of his friends.

Another issue that makes the protagonist apprehensive and agitated in the literary text is the exploitative behavioural patterns of the senior military officers after the civil war. Their actions reveal that they are suffering from antisocial personality disorder since they are selfish, not psychologically disturbed by the pains of others apart from themselves and families. According to the narrator:

Then the reward of the war for our country came. All our wells turned into petroleum oil and gas. And huge wealth came. The colonels and the generals sat down with the policemen, the permanent secretaries and the commissioners to plan how to share the wealth which we fought and died for. Money spread all over our land and even the commanders on the enemy camp were invited to the sharing in 'the spirit of rehabilitation and reconstruction'. New mansions, sky-scrapers, new mansions, sky-scrapers, new bridges, new and different cars germinated and flourished in our cities (26).

The instinctual drive of the military leaders for wealth and riches did not end during the civil war as they further demonstrate their excessive impulses towards self-enrichment upon discovery of "petroleum oil and gas" to the detriment of the poor in society. Initially, Kofo appears to be ignorant of the exploitative nature of the military officers, political leaders and other wealthy personalities who hail from their town. Even though they never contribute to the economic development of society, he feels proud of them and remains unconscious of their psychopathic disorders.

Musa brings past experiences of the civil war that remained hidden to the consciousness of his son, Kofo, who in turns recounts these to his friends whose parents happen to be exploiters. Having

become consciously aware of their antisocial personality disorders and consequences in society, he reports, thus: “Rekiya’s father is a rich contractor. They say he made loads of money from the war without fighting. He supplied medicine and equipment to the generals and colonels through the ministry. He is now a rich man. My father who actually fought is not a rich man. There are many things on my mind that I am not yet able to explain, and I must let you into them” (32). This moment of conscious awareness in the novel creates psychological and emotional disturbances in the mind of Kofo and consequently triggers his aggressive behaviour towards his friends, especially as he addresses Gbenga: “My father is an ex-soldier. He fought bravely during the war before we were born. He told me that as brave soldiers die fighting the war, officers celebrate the victory. They get promotion, collect the salaries of the dead soldiers to build new houses” (51). Kofo is privy to information about the corrupt nature of top military officers during the civil war which contributed to the impoverishment of their subordinates including his own family. Apparently, his mental consciousness about the psychopathic elements in the army becomes activated and this influences his thoughts and behavioural patterns towards his friends especially Gbenga. Kofo expresses psychic conflict over the irony of life where a supposed hero and patriot could become wretched while their commanders live in affluence.

The wretchedness of Kofo’s patriotic father which is inflicted upon him by top military officers and leaders influences his psychological processes. The unconscious act of Seun’s father like splashing of muddy water on Kofo’s motor-cycle remains fresh in his preconscious memory and this often triggers more emotional disturbances in his mind. He compares the life of a courageous soldier to that of a skillful footballer whose effort is not appreciated at the end of a match but a less skillful player who converts his pains into a goal is declared a hero. The analogy depicts the painful experience of combatant soldiers whose patriotism is never valued and celebrated in society. Like Musa, Kofo cannot push away his hurtful imaginative memories of the civil war as he observes the exploitation, injustice and inequalities that characterized symbolic community. Both characters are thus being haunted by knowledge of past horrible experiences and

the present predicaments of the people that could lead to bleak future if not carefully handled. This is the task before Kofo and his generation in the novel. The novelist presents a postwar society whose leaders have failed to correct the atrocities being perpetrated by a few citizens who have been empowered by the law of the nation to provide security, food, shelter and so on for the betterment of society.

Military and Political Conspiracy

Obafemi decries the conspiracy between senior military officers and politicians to mete untold hardship on majority of Nigerians in contemporary society. As a reaction against the gang-up by these psychopathic elements, the masses resolved to remain adamant not to give them their mandates. In the novel, the narrator laments over their deceptive attitudes during electioneering campaigns:

Will the politicians have fulfilled any of their promises made during their election campaigns? Promises to provide everything under the sun. ‘Vote for me and my great party. Vote for progress and democracy. These are the politicians’ slogans as election ranges. ‘What will you do for our village if we give you our vote? You come here every four years and take our votes to the city. Yet you return to us at the end and ask for new votes (91-92).

Politicians and military leaders can be perceived as psychopathic characters because of their excessive instinctual drive for gratification and lack of empathy to the less privileged in society. This view is corroborated by Ogbeidi’s (2012:7) study that states: “The civilian leaders provide opportunities for senior army official to increase their personal wealth in reward for their loyalty to the stability of the political regime. Politicians may approach the military for direct intervention in government, to limit the power of political opponents, or the politician may tacitly acquiesce to such involvement.” This submission implies that both the military leaders and Nigerian politicians are complementary characters, displaying psychopathological syndromes

that are responsible for maladaptive behaviours of citizens and the level of underdevelopment in society even after the civil war. The thoughts of unfulfilled promises of politicians aided by military officers create emotional conflict in the mind of the narrator: 'But I still think they should pity us and use our votes to improve our village. Instead, after elections votes have been counted, they disappear into Seun's and Gbenga's father's mansion where there is every amenity (92). The novelist satirizes the deceitful nature of the politicians who only appear during electioneering campaigns also trigger emotional conflicts in characters as depicted by the narrator. They are perceived as being selfish, wicked, extravagant and lacking empathy, among other psychopathological characteristics.

Political Disillusionment and Resistance

The novelist imaginatively captures citizens of a nation who psychologically reflect on the failures of the politicians by pointing out their own basic needs which require attention. They are now conscious of the fact that politicians only collect their votes and convert them into money and power for their selfish gains:

...for so many years we toil. We pay heavy tax to government. We do community work to improve the lot of our people. But it seems the government has forgotten us. All our votes fetch us nothing. Elections are like making ritual sacrifices to a flowing river. We get nothing from many years of independence. No electricity, no pipe-borne water, no tarred road and no health clinics. There is a lot of murmuring going as if pointing accusing fingers at the speaker.' (99)

The traumatic war experiences continue to haunt Musa and this influence his actions whenever he comes into contact with military officers and politicians. He knew that they never meant well for the people who are majorly gullible and impoverished and through the mind of Kofo, we become aware of Musa's reaction against the

psychopathic characters who claim to be messiahs. Since traumatic events can be recollected in life, Musa's personal reflection on his unpleasant civil war encounters often influence his thought processes and actions in society as he demonstrated above. The continuous flow of thoughts, emotional feelings and perceptions of the protagonist are expressed through stream of consciousness in any literary work. In the story, the writer deploys this technique to bring the past unpleasant memories of the major character, his current psychic and emotional conflicts as well as the perceived bleak future of the country to the conscious awareness of readers. One could imagine Musa pouring out his psychological pains without any solution. He attributes his impoverished condition to the unjust dismissal he received from the military and the uncontrollable instinctual drive of the top officers for gratification undermining the plights of junior combatants in the armed forces.

Psychic Pains and Cathartics

Catharsis is the purgation of emotional feelings with a view to improving personal health and psychological wellbeing. Through the techniques of free association, Sonja and other characters are able to alleviate their psychic and emotional pains in the turbulent and poverty-stricken society. For instance, in the text Musa displays displeasure over the abnormalities perpetuated by his former commander during the civil:

He turns to Seun's father. 'Look, he gave the order that we shoot the enemy. Most of the time from his bedroom, where he dey enjoyment the benefit of all Soja wey don die for battle front. In those two years and more, Oga marry two wives and build two big houses for city. He retire and come village come build this empire. Now, he dey praise his class and left the rest of us for the sun.

Ideally, combatants, especially the junior officers should be given special package instead of being abandoned to their fate after any war

even though they have no education certificate. The problems of inequality and negligence are what triggered the aggressive reaction of Musa during a social gathering in the novel. Apart from his unpleasant memories of the civil war that influence his behavioural patterns in his community, the humiliation he received from Seun's father is causality.

The masses are now conscious of the deceitful behaviour of the exploiters who claim to alleviate their sufferings. They collaborate with foreign investors to exploit their own people drawing on expressions that would appeal to the emotions of the audience; "Today, we bring you good tidings. You can see that we have company. Our white friends have come to give us assistance. They have come to bring smiles back unto our faces. Faces which suffering has made wrinkled over the years" (101). In spite of the miserable condition of the people in the community, disgruntled elements in civil society and the armed forces still devise means to further exploit the masses of their resources. However, in this narrative the people of Giro community appear to have conscious awareness of the tricks of the bourgeoisie among them.

Restorative Agitation and Exploitation

Retrospection is the recollection of past experiences which could be pleasant or unpleasant to the character in retrospection. In this novel, the protagonist often reflects on his civil war experiences, the aftermath and impending disasters for everyone in the nation. The narrator reports the view of a military character who attempts to justify the exploitation of the white investors in Nigeria, thus; 'When the white people first came to us, it was to colonize us. We were a people colonized by strangers. We were a part of the British Empire (101). The exploiters are eloquent in their speech deliveries because of their determination to convince the people and continue in their uncontrollable exploitative drive. The mouthpiece of the foreign investors and capitalists begins:

Today, we govern ourselves. We control our own destinies. Today, we also live in poverty. Our farms are dry. We hear only of the great wealth pouring from the nation's oil wells. We hear of the oil pipes and turbines from across the length and breadth of

our country. The oil they say flows to foreign countries. We here live in very sorry conditions. Our women travel on planked trucks to very distant places to buy food which we eat. We are divided among ourselves into tribes and religions (101).

In the narrative, Musa often reflects on his civil war experiences and the disillusionments that befell victims of the war including dismissed veteran soldiers like himself. However, Seun's father tries to justify military in politics and persuade the people to accept foreigners as partners in progress. Even if the mission of the foreign investors is genuine considering the calibers of the delegation to Giro community, the presence of the politicians and military leaders with psychopathic characteristics could make the masses doubtful of their sincerity. For instance, the narrator reveals that; "Mr Peacock is a government diplomat from the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Whatever we agree here today, he will take back to the British Government and it will approve. Your highness, our good fortunes will not go to the backyard of our neighbours. This is our own chance to improve our town, long neglected by our own governments" (102). Musa never allows the exploiters and their cohorts to deceive the people of Giro because of their past woeful performances as political representatives. However, the speaker argues that since the Nigerian politicians have failed, the people should allow foreigners address such problems by granting them the permission to operate on their land. This affirms that the Nigerian politicians have failed the masses woefully and so there is the need to collaborate with foreigners to alleviate the sufferings in society. Apart from the corrupt civilians who often display antisocial personality disorders in terms of excessive desires for gratification, greed, avarice, exploitation and insensitivity towards the plights of the masses, the top military personnel have also been indicted of psychopathic syndromes. These and other factors influence the thoughts and actions of the characters in this narrative. To the people, they have been tried and tested so they cannot be trusted with their future even though their purpose of visit would be beneficial for societal growth and development.

Conclusion

This paper revealed that the thoughts and motivations of characters in society are influenced by certain factors that are hidden in the unconscious level of their minds. In the novel, the past memories of Musa are mainly responsible for most of his actions and unconscious thoughts in his community. The war negative experiences are further transferred to his son, Kofo, which also trigger his behaviours and thoughts as portrayed in the narrative. The study found that the psychopathic syndromes of the Nigerian politicians are also demonstrated by superior military officers especially in the aspects of uncontrollable instinctual drive for sexuality, material wealth, exploitation, looting of treasury and so on.

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