

**VIOLENCE AS AN ALBATROSS TO PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE:
A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPRAISAL OF CHINUA ACHEBE'S A MAN
OF THE PEOPLE AND ARTHUR MILLER'S THE CRUCIBLE**

By

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Abstract

More than ever, violence and criminality double as a global problem and re-occurring social issues eliciting serious attention from the people, governments, and researchers. Its nature, manifestations, perpetrators and effects differ with respect to contexts; hence, there is a growing awareness that the phenomena: violence stand out as an obstacle to peace co-existence citizens in societies. This paper, therefore, aims at exploring and exposing those mundane tendencies of man which contribute to chaotic situations as a result of violence. The texts under study have been critiqued from different angles but none from the comparative perspective, judging that the texts under study are from different genres, cultural background and literary periods, thereby creating a gap in scholarship which this paper tries to bridge. Relying on psychoanalytic theory, this paper examines the different aspects of violence that characterize the protagonists of these texts. Findings reveal that emotional, physical and psychological violence are prevalent in the literary texts under study. This paper submits that the esteemed institution such as the court of law should always follow the rule of law through proper scrutiny of cases and eschew using superstition as its basis for judgement and also those in places of authority should shun deceit and all forms of violence as well as lead the people aright. All these are geared towards eliminating criminality and violence in the 21st century globalized world.

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Introduction

Generally, human interactions, relationship and behavior at varying levels whether individual, family, community, nation and states have often been marked with manifestations of violent tendencies and actions. Reports reveal that more than a million lives are lost annually owing to different forms of violence ranging from self-inflicted to group violence Krug *et. al.* (2002).

Violence as a social issue has been conceptualized by different scholars and researchers. However, the World Health Organization defines violence thus: 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' Rutherford *et. al.* (2002).

Importantly, the phenomenon transcends all races, gender, professions and ages. In recent times, there are traces as well as glaring instances of violence in human societies. It exhibits itself in psychological, emotional and physical forms. Violence in its expression can either be pronounced or concealed and often times it is used interchangeably with the word 'abuse' by some scholars.

Although its manifestations and nomenclature differ from one milieu to another, the common denominator is that irrespective of its form of occurrence, there seems to be a far-reaching consensus on its inhibiting and destructive nature. More so, theories of violence tend to compartmentalize violence considering its cause, and this is grouped into broad categories and conceived in two spectrums: violence as a condition of human nature and as the consequence of a damaged psyche Bryn, (2012).

Violence is seen as an albatross in the sense that it poses obstacles to peaceful co-existence of the people. According to Oxford Advanced American Dictionary among other definitions sees albatross as "a thing that causes problems or prevents you from doing something. It is on the basis of this definition that this paper sees violence as an albatross to peaceful co-existence of any given society.

From the foregoing, following these rallying thoughts, this paper delves into the exposition of violence as a hindrance to peaceful co-existence

and the mundane tendencies of man who double as both the perpetrator and the recipient of violence as depicted in the selected literary texts. The two texts under study have received numerous criticisms but it seems that hardly any research has been done from the comparative analytical view point.

Noorbaskhsh and Ali in an article entitled "Event, Iterability, and Justice practiced in the sense of law: Derridan Reading of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*", scrutinize the text using Derridan theory to pose a challenge to self-created authorities to level the differences, so as to collapse the fortress of monopoly. They propose a free will decision through getting rid of illegitimately legitimized acclaimed justices and empires that take laws into their hands as if life and death belong to them. Using historicist approach, Deanna ridicules the questionable behaviour of the 1950's society in an unpolished thesis "The Unwelcome Truth: Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* as a Satirical Political Allegory". The text is seen as an instrument to influence modern society's understanding of social reform by cautioning people not to blindly follow the law. In other words, she posits that the people should learn from history of their mistakes and recognize what she calls 'patterns of destructive behaviour. Chinua Achebe's third novel, *A Man of the People* in an article entitled "The Writer as Prophet: Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* Fifty-Two years After" by Dele Bamidele and Victor Akwu, attest to the inseparability of African literature from commitment/engagement of society. The writer is the voice of conscience and vision of his society. Using sociological theoretical approach, the paper brings to fore the decaying situation of man and his society. Ngozi Olugu and Charity Olugu in their paper "A *Man of the People* and Hubris. Odili and Nanga's Nemesis". The essay explores the social and political events in the text using Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory. It also exposes chief Nanga's overwhelming confidence and pride that left him with daunting consequences. Odili Samalu is Nanga's opponent who swore to give it back to him because he (Nanga) treated him as no man would treat another. And so, Odili's determined role acted as a catalyst to Nanga's hubris and eventually tragic end. In the end, Chief Nanga's hubristic actions presented him a proud mediocre, a bully and a moral torpidity culminated in violence and deceit of the people he is representing, then visited by the law of retributive justice orchestrated by Odili's overreaching deterministic ambition and vengeance. The critical reviews allude to deteriorated political situation in the narrative, thus none

touched on the psychoanalytic theory which tends to probe the characters of the protagonists or the cast to know why they do what they do.

Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory in literary criticism reveals to the readers of literary texts the psychological attributes of the minds of fictional characters as well as how the tragic flaw, *hubris* contributes to the development of both plot and theme of a narrative.

According to Schultz and Schultz, psychoanalytic theorists, human behaviour is deterministic and is governed by irrational forces, the unconscious, as well as instinctual and biological drives. In their personality theory, they assert that there are three levels of personality: the conscious which entails all sensations and experiences of which we are aware of at any given time; the preconscious which is the storehouse of the memories, perceptions and thoughts which we are not consciously aware at the moment but can easily summon into consciousness; and the unconscious, this on the other hand, contains the major driving power behind all behaviours and is the repository of forces we cannot see or control.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), a great psychologist submits that personality consists of three elements: the id, the ego, and the super ego. These elements are usually referred to as the Freudian Model of the Psyche or the tripartite model of personality. The id, according to him, is driven by internal basic drives and needs. These drives are typically instinctual and impulsive. Examples of such drives are hunger, thirst, drive for power, and the drive for sex or libido. This aspect of personality acts according to pleasure principle and it avoids pains and seeks pleasure. According to Hoffman, it is located in the obscure and inaccessible part of our personality which is entirely unconscious, hence it is remote from our understanding and difficult to manage. Due to its impulsive and instinctual nature, it is usually not aware of its actions. It is selfish and normally calls for instant gratification. When its demands are met, there is pleasure but when denied, it results in chaos, Freud refers to it as the 'will to power' (25).

The ego on the other hand is the second part of personality. According to Hoffman, 'the ego is both conscious and unconscious in that it lays the explanation for the conflict between instinctual pleasure and reality which takes place with it' (25). The ego, therefore, is located in our unconscious and depends on the reality. It decides what is suitable for the individual and which impulses and desires. According to Freud, the ego is the

'will to meaning' (25). It is modified by the direct influence of the external world, works by reason and always compromises or postpones satisfaction to avoid negative consequences on society.

The super ego operates as a moral conscience between the id and the ego. There is internalization of morality and propriety. As such, it incorporates the values and morals of society which are learned from one's parents and others. While id issues blind pleasure, super ego issues bland commands and all these commands ensue from a character's within.

Comparative Psychoanalytic Analysis of *A Man of the People* and *The Crucible*

In analyzing literary texts, psychoanalytic theory is used to 'decipher or interpret the concealed meaning within a text or to better understand the author's intention' (Urama, 2018: 87). For the purpose of this study, the psychoanalytic criticism is applied to some of the fictional characters in the texts under study to explore how their actions and utterances expose their innate personalities and ultimately lead to violence and criminality in their societies. This study adopts Freudian psychoanalytic theory to examine how the psyche of the fictional characters influence both their actions and utterances.

In *A Man of the People*, Achebe among other things deals with the psychological conflicts of Africans that arose as a result of post-independence disillusionment due to failure of the indigenous leadership in the continent. This failure gave rise to corruption, political violence and a lot of other criminal acts among the political class in the quest for power.

The novel explores how the tragic flaw helps to present the story of the novel as a tragedy of a failed nation. This is realized through the rivalry between the protagonist, Odili Samalu and the antagonist, Chief M. A. Nanga which is fueled by repressed anger and revenge. In examining the two characters, it is seen that most of their actions are driven by either their id, ego or super ego. The instinctual and impulsive drive for revenge, desire for sex or libido and desire for power are made evident in above two characters.

Odili, as seen in the novel, is mostly driven by his id. At the beginning of the novel, he seems to be irritated with the whole arrangement being made for the reception of the Honourable Minister of Culture, Chief M. A. Nanga to Anata Grammar School, where he happens to be a teacher. To other teachers, the visit is a grand occasion but in Odili we see a repressed anger:

As I stood in one corner of that vast tumult waiting for the arrival of the Minister I felt intense bitterness welling up in my mouth. Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gunpowder in honour of one of those who had started the country down the slopes of inflation. I wished for a miracle for a thunder to hush down this ridiculous festival and tell the poor contemptible people one or two truths. But of course it would be useless. They were not only ignorant but cynical (Achebe 1966:2).

From the above excerpt, it is crystal clear that there is a repressed anger in the tone of Odili. He has an information about the Minister which the rest of the people are not aware of. This information has been in his subconscious and it calls up an anger for Odili whenever the Minister's name is mentioned. This information is no other than that Odili witnessed the plenary session of the parliament where Chief Nanga was instrumental to the removal of the Minister for Finance for no just cause but for selfishness. It is this disgusting attitude displayed by Nanga that influences Odili's disposition.

Incidentally, this feeling of disgust towards the Minister is automatically extinguished and turns into pleasure as soon as among all the teachers, Odili is the one that receives a warm embrace from the Honourable minister. Immediately, the hatred Odili had for the Minister disappears such that he listens to his speech with a rapt attention such that he could even repeat the entire speech if he is asked to do so. Odili is even amazed at his own disposition: 'I became a hero in the eyes of the crowd, I was dazed. Everything about me became unreal... I knew I ought to be angry with myself but I wasn't. I found myself wondering whether – perhaps – I had been applying politics stringent standards that didn't belong to it (9). As can be seen, Odili's feelings is totally out of his control. The id as a pleasure seeker is also portrayed in the place where Odili explains about the conducive nature of the room he is given in Chief Nanga's residence in Bori, he confesses: 'If I were at that moment made a minister I would be most anxious to remain one forever (37).

When the id's desire is achieved as has been stated earlier, there is pleasure but when it is not, chaos follows. Odili's desire to quench his libidinal desire is made impossible by Chief Nanga who sleeps with Elsie, Odili's girlfriend under the pretext that they both deny having any affair going on between them. As a result of that, since Nanga contributed to his not achieving his sexual desire, everything about him must crumble before

Odili, including his political position as well as his wife to be. He has nothing else left other than revenge. He assures Nanga that though he had won that time, he (Odili) is destined to laugh last (72).

According to Freud in Adler, aggression is seen as acting out of bottled up emotion resulting from hatred. The act committed by Nanga against Odili is an act of emotional violence. Of course, his ego as a man has been deflated and he is not taking it lightly for he says:

What mattered was that a man had treated me as no man had a right to treat another-not even if he was a master and the other slave; and my manhood required that I make him pay for this insult in full measure. In flesh and blood terms I realized that I must go back, seek out Nanga's intended parlour wife and give her the works, good and proper. All this flashed through my mind in one brief moment blinding insight- just like that without warning! (76)

It is this desire for revenge that prompted Odili into throwing his strength into active politics such that according to him '...apart from everything else it would add a second string to my bow when I came to deal with Nanga (78).

Odili's strong desire to fight for Nanga's political seat is also an exposé of a blind desire. This is because already his political party, CPC already knows that they would not be able to win election in this dispensation but because of his drive for revenge to tarnish the image of Nanga such that even if he wins, the Prime Minister would not be able to include him in his cabinet (108). He goes to the extent of taking his campaign to the doorstep of his opponent where he is treated with a great disapproval even from his headmaster, who could not hide his ill feelings and goes ahead to pay him off as well as terminate his appointment. In spite of all those pointers, Odili is not deterred from his quest for revenge. At a point, he begins to enjoy violence. He employs body guards to guard him as well as molest his enemies as seen in the place where Boniface the leader of his body guards physically molest Nanga's supporter as Odili explains: 'It was also amusing, really, how the cowards slunk away from the road-blocks they had put up when Boniface reached out and grabbed two of their leaders, brought their heads together like dumb-bells and left them to fall to either side of him (113).

Chief Nanga's sexual desire, which is also blind desire for sexual gratification is what has rekindled Odili's hatred for him and this singular act has generated a lot of heat going on between him and Odili, whom he is old

enough to be his father. His emotional violence against Odili by sleeping with his girlfriend is what has moved Odili into fighting him in all ramifications. Nanga also has a deadly desire for his political post and whoever proves to be a stumbling block must be removed at all cost. His ego that he must win election pushes him into trying to bribe Odili with two hundred and fifty pounds and scholarship for him to drop his ambition of contesting his seat. In trying to make Odili see reasons, he compromises his dignity as a Minister and seeks to make peace with Odili thereby postponing his own pleasure because he knows that whether Odili likes it or not he shall win the election for he tell Odili:

I am not afraid of you. Every goat and every fowl in this country knows that you will fail woefully. You will lose your deposit and disgrace yourself. I am only giving you this money because I feel that after all my years of service to my people I deserve to be elected unopposed so that my detractors in Bori will know that I have my people solidly behind me. (118)

This goes a long way to explain that Nanga is desperate to win the election at all cost and by whatever means. Adler posits that characters who have superiority complex such as Nanga are given to boasting, self-centredness, and a tendency to denigrate others. In the above excerpt, Nanga is driven by ego.

Odili's super ego stops him from being enticed with Nanga's bait. He tells him to his face that his answer is a capital NO. He tells him that he cannot buy him over 'with a few dirty pounds' (119) No wonder he feels so bad that Max, his friend descends so low as to collecting money from members of P.O.P. He explains his disapproval to Max: 'I am sorry Max, but I think you have committed a big blunder. I thought we wanted our fight clean...' (126). Odili's action here is driven by the super ego which makes him act in a socially acceptable way, which employs morality. Odili's refusal to be bought over by Nanga escalated his hatred for him and his family such that Odili's father is removed from his post as the chairman of P.O.P and is accused of anti-party activities. He also sees to that the old man is physically molested for unpaid tax and when Odili threatens to take it up, one of the policemen makes jest of him: 'If I be you I go take am down too, when I done finish take am up. Turn your back make I see the nyarsh you go take fight Nanga' (132).

Nanga's drive for political power and revenge knows no bounds. He unleashes psychological blackmail (psychological violence) on the people of Urua to ensure that they suffer for the sake of his being challenged by one of their sons. This is seen in the way water pipes meant for their community's water project are carted away by Public Works lorries on the instruction of Chief Nanga. This actually worked as the people of Urua wasted no time to denounce Odili and make a promise to cast their votes for Nanga (134). Nanga driven by id ensures that Odili is assaulted physically during his inaugural campaign where Odili appears uninvited. This physical violence against Odili is a criminal act on the part of Nanga. From the foregoing, the violence and criminal acts in the above novel is driven by the characters' id, ego, and super ego governed by irrational forces: the preconscious, the conscious and the unconscious.

In this play the characters at some point or the other are driven by their preconscious, conscious and unconscious personalities. There is also repressed hatred, anger, revenge and so on driven by id, ego or super ego. Although the story of the novel centres on getting to the root of the witchcraft saga as encountered in the play, it is vividly clear that the motive behind all those machinations centre on vindictiveness or revenge as one character tries to incriminate the other because of one selfish reason or the other.

Looking at Abigail William's character, her hatred, anger and revenge against Elizabeth Proctor is driven by her id for sexual or libidinal desire towards John Proctor. She formerly had an affair with John Proctor and still has the urge to continue in spite of Proctor's wife's knowledge of the said affair and her subsequent dismissal from working in the proctor's. Abigail's revenge is centred on the fact that if Elizabeth is sentenced to death for witchcraft, she would end up having Proctor to herself despite Proctor's insistence that he does not want her again but she is still so much in love with proctor, whom she tells Abigail: John- I am waitin' for you every night. (22)

Abigail is actually angry with Elizabeth for cutting off her relationship with her husband and also for soiling her reputation in the village and is sworn to take her pound of flesh. This anger has been in her subconscious but when the opportunity calls up, she eagerly utilizes it. She commits an emotional violence against Mrs. Elizabeth Proctor. Emotional violence entails the destruction of one's self-worth through humiliation, criticism or persistent insult, (WHO).

Abigail makes sure that Mrs Elizabeth Proctor is incarcerated for indulging in witchcraft. Her desperation for sexual gratification and revenge is portrayed in her discussion with John Proctor:

Abigail, *in tears*: I look for John Proctor that took me from my sleep and put knowledge in my heart! I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men! And you bid me tear the light out of my eyes? I will not, I cannot! You loved me, John Proctor....

Abigail's id makes her violent as she indulges in emotional violence against those whose characters she defames as she moves to vengeance. She as well engages in psychological violence as seen in the way she influences the other girls in the witchcraft hysteria to accuse innocent people.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and Ann Putnam are two instigators of the witchcraft hysteria in the play. Both of them have repressed anger. Their id drives them towards taking revenge from their assumed enemies. It is Ann Putnam that first of all put the idea that both her daughter and Betty are bewitched. She suspects that Goody Osburn is responsible for the death of her daughters. She has not been able to accuse her until things began to materialize with the issue of witchcraft coming into play. She blindly desires to know the cause of her babies' death by sending Tituba to conjure the spirits for her but when the truth is about to come to the fore, she shifts the blame of indulging in paganism to causing a hell of confusion by pointing accusing fingers on others.

For Thomas Putnam, he is all out to take revenge on those who rejected that her brother – in- law, James Bayley, who though is qualified to the Minister of Salem but whose acceptance was rejected by a faction. Mr. Putnam, whose ego places higher than most people in the village due to his financial disposition as a massive land owner sees the witchcraft saga as an opportunity to trample upon his enemies. The desire for revenge is high with the Putnam's who are all out to take revenge against all their acclaimed enemies. They are driven by their need for revenge and their avaricious greed land contributes to the huge travesty of justice that was the Salem witch trials.

Reverend Paris allows the witchcraft hysteria to gain ground due to his own selfishness. He allows his id to lead him into allowing people's character to be defamed especially those of them that he sees as his enemies. His id drives him into cashing in on the situation of crisis to draw

people to himself because many now run to him as their spiritual guide and support, therefore he allows the witch hunt to continue though he knows that it is not valid, he does not want people to know the actual thing that happened.

Miller exposes John Proctor as one that is driven by super ego. Although his life is stained due to the life of adultery he had lived but he is sworn to do what is right and to protect his dignity and tries not to implicate anyone even if he dies, it must be with dignity. He wants his good name to remain for the sake of posterity.

Apart from psychological and emotional violence, there is also physical violence committed against those innocent people killed by hanging for the mere fact that they have been accused and they have no means of proving their accusers wrong. Through John Proctor's assertion driven by super ego, it is clearly stated that all the accusations made in the play are geared towards vengeance, Proctor:...I 'll tell you what's walking Salem-vengeance is walking Salem. We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! This warrant's vengeance! (77). John Proctor is so emotionally abused such that at a point his wife is used to see if he could break down and attest to his being involved in witchcraft.

In this play, there is prevalence of physical, psychological and emotional violence. Innocent people are wrongfully persecuted, imprisoned and eventually hanged by a corrupt judicial system. All these acts of violence and criminality resulting from defamation of character vary from greed to vengeance

Although the two texts under analysis are from different social and cultural background, as well as different genres of literature, they share the theme of violence and criminality in common. In the two texts, the theme of violence and criminality has been shown to be a big threat to a peaceful co-existence of the characters in the texts and the societies of the texts. The same types of violence are encountered in them such as physical, emotional and psychological violence. All these are geared towards achieving the goal of greed and vengeance.

Conclusion

In this paper, violence has been presented as an albatross to peaceful co-existence. As vividly demonstrated, various forms of violence ranging from emotional, physical and psychological violence have become a menace in

societies such that they can either be forcefully or subtly played out as underpinned in the literary texts. From the above analysis, it is deciphered that literary artists have from time immemorial continued to show that violence of all sorts pose a lot of obstacles to a peaceful co-existence of people in any society. All types of violence in the above two novels emanate from personal interests which override the interest of the majority of the populace. It is therefore recommended that literary artists should continue to showcase in their works how an esteemed institution such as court of law follows the rule of law through proper scrutiny of cases and eschew using superstition as basis for judgement and how political actors could do their politicking without bringing in their personal differences as this would bring about oneness prevent violence at all cost as this would definitely bring about global growth in the 21st century and beyond. Finally, this paper through the analysis of the above literary characters has established that there is a strong relationship between literature and psychology. This is achieved by showing that literature uses psychoanalysis for creative purposes and as such enriches the quality, value and legitimacy of literary texts. Literature can help us modify our cognitions, the internal structures of self, and this transformation according to Julia Devardhi (2009) can be achieved through psychoanalysis. It, therefore, enables the literary critic to explore new possibilities for reading, studying, and teaching of literature.

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