

Portrait of Lacanian Hero in Terhembra Shija's *The Siege, The Saga*

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Abstract

This paper uses Jacques Lacan's concepts of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real order to explore the rise of the hero as a defining portrait in this novel. This work aims at helping the readers understand the state of mind of Shija's hero- Targema and factors that influences him in his heroic quest. Lacanian theory makes literary study a thing of interest because it provides the opportunity of dissecting a text and bringing out important aspects of the work. As a theory and practice, it is an aspect that provides therapeutic treatment and then also coordinates for thinking about the relationship the exists between illusion and social reality towards an illustration

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Introduction

Lacanian theory was named after Jacques Lacan (1901-81). Lacques founded this theory through reconceptualizing Freud using post-structuralism. He is said to be the most influential Psychoanalyst after its founder Sigmund Freud (1856—1939). Lacanian theory has aided in the development of this field called Psychoanalysis not just as a theory but in clinical practice. Simpson had this to say, “Lacan's theories provide a broad, generic framework for explaining human action as it relates to both human behavior and institutional practices”(18). Simpson's statement adds more weight to what the paper stated earlier. Homer asserts that, Lacanian thought now pervades the disciplines of literary and film studies, women's studies and social theory and is applied to such diverse fields as education, legal studies

and international relations (1). This simply means that Lacanian theory has attracted attention from various fields of study.

Sigmund Freud divides the working of the mind into three parts; the conscious, unconscious and the pre-conscious. Qazi states that, "The named them as the id (forming the reservoir of libido or psychic energy), the ego (representing conscious life) and the superego (functioning as the voice of conscience and censorship)"(1). That is these three Freud's division came to be known as the id (conscious), the ego (unconscious) and the superego (the preconscious). Lacan developed quite a different idea on how the mind grows from infant to adult and he also, developed phases for the working of the human mind; the Imaginary (mirrostage), Symbolic and Real. Qazi claims that, 'It must be, however, pointed out that Lacan reinterpreted Freud in the light of Structuralist and Post Structuralist theories and thus changed psychoanalysis from an essentially humanist philosophy or theory to a Post-Structuralist(1)'. Jacques Lacan has successfully expanded Freud's Psychoanalytic approach makes it a relevant field of study even till this day.

"French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan says "psychoanalysis should be sign of language inhabited by the subject... man is the subject captured and tortured by language" (Hill 2008:34).

In a seminar, Lacan discusses the topic in question as "baby's cry to the mother... cry is not merely an institutional signal but is not merely an institutional signal but is inserted in a synchronic world of cries organized in a linguistic structure long before the child is capable of articulating and recognizing words (Evan 2006:37).

The online encyclopedia Britannica defines hero as: the main character in a literary work; the term is also used in a specialized sense for any figure celebrated in the ancient legends of a people or in such early heroic epics as *Gilgamesh*, the *Iliad*, *Bewulf*, or *La Chanson de Roland*.

The Biosketch of Terhemba Shija

Terhemba Shija was born on 23rd November, 1960 in Gboko, Nigeria. He is a teacher and politician. He is a Nigerian academic, poet, novelist, critic and prolific writer. He lectures at the Nasarawa State University, Keffi. As a prolific writer, he is the author of several books in the genres of fiction, biography, literacy criticism and poetry.

Synopsis of *The Siege, The Saga*

The novel centres around Targema who has undergone diverse experiences in his bid to attain his dream. His relationship with Torkwase on campus was replete with frustration but he keeps his vision alive until he eventually marries her. His political ambition equally faces a lot of challenges especially with the negative publication of his wife adulterous acts which eventually leads to her death as she seeks spiritual solution to imminent collapse of her marriage.

Lacanian Hero in Terhemba Shija's *The Siege, The Saga*.

The Lacanian hero would be discussed taking into cognizance the concepts of the Imaginary (the mirror), the Symbolic, and the Real to imply that an individual sense of individuation can in no way develop merely due to one's 'inner, wealth' or 'innate potential'. The Lacanian hero in this novel, *The Siege, The Saga* in Targema. It starts with Targema a University of Maiduguri undergraduate, who is from a very poor background; an imprisoned father who accidentally kills his son, a poor mother who can hardly fend for her family, siblings who drop out of school because of lack of money and for Targema to be able to further. He discovers himself through Marxist ideology that inculcates in him hatred for those responsible for the unjustified class division in the society. He finds himself totally at war with the ideology that promotes class division in the society as the character Targema is made to say: Law students were required to wear black suits and ties in the hot Maiduguri weather and were expected to promote the bourgeois image of the middle class and the crown (21).

To Targema studying law is the right platform he could use to stage war against those causing the palpable socio-economic imbalance in the Nigerian society (21). This ideology shapes his ego, in a way, that one would realize that a hero has been born. In the text, the character Targema has this to say:

He spoke loudly and unreservedly, about exploiters and capitalist marginalizing, the peasants and the downtrodden of society. His dialectics spared no politician or businessmen who were rich enough to own a car. To Targema, these were birds of the same feather. He had the rage and the bitterness of an enlightened villager who felt estranged by the world around him and was poised for a revenge mission (22).

At this stage, Targema sees himself as a future hero as he 'was poised for a

revenge mission. Certain factors contribute in making Targema 'mirror' himself in this light of a future hero that would bring liberation to his people, he sees himself as one to create utopia. These factors try to carve out an identity for Targema and one of them is his family sacrifices. An ego is built because of these factors. Even Torkwase helps in massaging this ego of his, when she refuses to argue thither with him allowing his line of reasoning to overshadow hers even when she could argue further(23). These influences make Targema, feel that the way he can elevate the people's suffering is through the new wave of radicalism he has adopted on campus. At this stage Marxist ideology influences Targema's behaviour and his way of reasoning and this is why he finds fault in Torkwase's extravagant way of life(26). He sees Torkwase's boarding of flight to Lagos every now and then as absurd and uncalled for. One of the reasons why he is shying away from her sophisticated life that is full of luxury is that, he cannot afford, and lots of parties too. This ideology or new wave of radicalism does not allow Targema to see himself as the short village boy but gives him the mirror of a man with a 'big' ambition of being the people's messiah and this is a reflection of his ego.

As the story grows on, Targema realizes that his self-built identity of a future hero cannot really fit in the real world with his Marxist ideology. This particular incidence in this novel deflates his ego, the day Torkwase dumped him for a rich Alhaji with a Santana car:

And there she came. Like a star, dazzling, resplendent in her white blouse and tight fitting blue jeans trousers. Her high heeled shoes were white. She exuded an overpowering elegance that kept Targema's eyes surveying every step that she took as she walks into the car park, every swing of her waist and hips... Targema excused himself from Garba and moved forward to meet Torkwase. She turned to the other side... Torkwase walked all the way to where the Santana car was parked and placed a kiss on the owner's lips (35).

Targema hated the class division the more but this time with a shrunk ego, "now he realized he had a deep seated contempt for the society. He could not stand a society bereft of love, compassion and sympathy for the poor and needy"(38). It dawned on him that the society's ideology was in great contrast with his and if he really needed to fit in then a compromise might ensue in. And he has to choose to either serve the society or the client (39).

Lacanian's Symbolic order ensued in as Targema tries to move away from

being a hero in his own mirror to being a hero, in the society's requirement. He is in need of a name; a solid identification in the society. Targema returns to Gboko and starts up a Law firm, this is captured in the writer's thought and Targema could not resist the sense of ecstasy and nostalgia that caught him at the end of his service year, he returned to Gboko and set up law practice. The melody and rhythm of Swange bands caught his soul(40). Ordinarily, Targema would have decided to return to the village and start a Law practice there but because he needed society's recognition, the society he fought against, he then opted for the city, Gboko. It is even seen that he joins the Moonshine Plaza's social group; a group with the likes of Chief Shagee, Zanaria, (the owner of the moonshine plaza) and a host of other politicians and successful business men. It is obvious that the society is beginning to inform Targema in the mode of Chief Shaagee, to be its kind of hero. He has to acquire wealth and buy a Santana car as a symbolic representation of the societal hero. Targema, does not just stop there he had to defend the bourgeois, the corrupt Chief Shaagee, 'Targema was, indeed, one of the quartet of lawyers that was hired to defend Chief Shaagee who had challenged Brigadier Shamaki's government at the Markudi High Court over violation of his human right the blanket accusation on all prominent politicians at the time of the coup was that of corruption...' (49).

Targema set up a very good fight and eventually gains victory in the case:

There was palpable silence for over two minutes after Targema's eloquent rendition. The venerable judge continued writing his notes unmindful of the anxiety that had enveloped both parties in the case. When finally Judgment was pronounced, the learned judge openly, commended Targema for putting up such a persuasive argument and accordingly ordered the release of his client, Chief Shaagee' (53).

This victory won him the crown of the societal hero or hero in accordance to society's ideology- the ideology of oppression of the downtrodden and glorification of the oppressor. Shija states, "the hero of the saga was clearly the young Targema"(53). Targema marries Torkwase the daughter of Zanaria to fully attain his status of the society's hero.

In the Lacanian categorization the "real" is a state in which an individual is free from all desires and demands as he/she is hardly affected by the worldly attractions(Qtd.Qazi:10). In the Lacanian concept 'Real Order', traces the

origin of the Real in Aristotle's 'Tuche' which means 'search for cause'. In Targema's case attained the status quo of the societal hero, his love for materialism and other attractions dies, he is determined to serve the people and this is seen in his decision to contest for the state's gubernatorial position. His former ideology of serving the people surfaces again. Shija buttresses this fact, Targema was clearly the opposite of Alex ideologically. He believed that all societies, especially those in the third world, had no reason to succumb to the so-called benefaction of the market forces of capitalism to determine the destinies of the people:

Targem, here, tries to go against the ideology of exploitation, this time not with the mind set of hatred for acquisition of material things but using the resources for the benefits of the downtrodden with the belief that the plight of the common man is not helpless and that the people can still be freed from the shackles of poverty (136).

Features Common with Targema

There are certain features common with Targema. He imbibes the ideology of fighting for the oppressed- his people.

About Targema:

He spoke loudly and unreservedly about exploiters and capital marginalizing the peasants and the downtrodden of society. His dialectics spared no politician or businessmen who were rich enough to own a car. To Targema, these were birds of the same feather. He had the rage and the bitterness of an enlightened villager who felt estranged by the world around him and was poised for a revenge mission (The Siege, The Saga 22).

He had the ideology of fighting against oppression. Although the situation was quite different. One was against corrupt indigenous leaders and the other colonialism.

Betrayal of ideology; Targema totally betrays his ideology when he is only dumped by his girlfriend. In other words, Shija's hero is not as determined and focused as expected of a gallant hero.

Conclusion

This study has explored the creative strategy and the socio-psychological contexts in which Targema, the hero in Shija's *The Siege, The Saga* went

through the phases of Lacan's concepts from, the Imaginary(the Mirror Phase), the Symbolic, and to the Real order. Through Lois Tyson module of how to interpret literary work through Lacanian lens the discourse has been able to looked at the use of Lacania hero in Terhemba Shija's *The Siege, The Saga*, Targema, how he starts by living in a world of fantasy where he envisions an utopia someday, as the story wears on, he finds himself in the web of societal ideology and at the end, he tries to flee from the Targema the society has created but this becomes a difficult task.

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